



# Newsletter

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## Sharing the Importance of Trees

YACWAG celebrated Tree Dressing Day in December with a display in Yatton and Congresbury libraries and bunting made from flags created by children from Yatton, Cleeve and Claverham Scouts, Yeo Valley Forest School, Yatton Junior School and St Andrew's School in Congresbury.

Tree Dressing Day was inspired by customs from all over the world and highlights trees and their importance to people and wildlife. This year the 'dressing' itself was augmented by an informative display of tree facts.

YACWAG volunteers helped groups of children with Hapa Zome, a Japanese technique of leaf printing in which the natural leaf dyes are released by gentle hammering onto a piece of fabric. This proved a very popular (if noisy) activity! The children also wrote how they felt about trees on strips of paper which formed the 'bark' of trees made from the leaf prints. They displayed their impressive knowledge of trees, recognising them as essential for life on Earth because they provide oxygen to breathe, wood to build houses and furniture with, fruit to eat and a home for wildlife, their flowers being good for bees and their berries and nuts for birds and animals.

Special thanks go to all the children who worked so hard to create the display and to Chloe Brown (Yatton) and Sue Lovesey (Congresbury) who co-ordinated and executed it.



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# What is Re-Wilding?

Re-wilding is all the rage but what does it mean for us in North Somerset, and what does it mean for YACWAG?

According to the RSPB, in 1966 there were 40 million more birds in the UK than there are today. In 1970 we had 20 million pairs of 'farmland birds', including lapwings, grey partridges, linnets, corn buntings, yellowhammers, skylarks, tree sparrows and turtle doves. Most depend on insects for their chicks and the shelter of hedgerows for their nests. By 1990 we had lost half of them and by 2010 that number had halved again. There are similar sad stories for other wildlife. In fact one in ten species in the UK is threatened with extinction and abundance has fallen dramatically in all wildlife. Insects are particularly badly hit. Moths have declined 88 percent since 1970, butterflies 76 percent. Bees and other pollinating insects are in serious decline and wild flowers, including the seed-bearing weeds that birds depend on, are also doing badly. Although there are success stories: greater horseshoe bats are increasing in number, bitterns are increasing, red kites have spread following re-introduction and otters are doing very well in many areas, including North Somerset; these are the exception, and the populations of even these species are all still only at a fraction of their former level. (Information from the State of Nature report 2013).

If you want some good news, read '*Wilding*' by Isabella Tree - 'the return of nature to a British farm'. This remarkable, inspirational book is the story of an experiment in Sussex to let nature back into the farmed landscape. Since I read it I have recommended it at every opportunity. It is a very well-written story, full of fascinating information, but above all, it gives hope where we might think things are hopeless. Do read it - if you read quickly, borrow my copy.

Re-wilding, by definition, should be about returning land to its former uncultivated state. At Knepp, the estate that is the subject of '*Wilding*', that is what has happened, or is beginning to happen. Hundreds of hectares of farmland has been allowed to return to a wilder state. It is not farmed - although herds of large herbivores do graze it and some are sold for meat. There are no fertilisers, no pesticides, no herbicides, no fences, no gates. Nature is having a free rein over a wide area.

The term re-wilding has caught on. I remember when in the 1980s I used to give talks about 'Gardening for Wildlife', someone would always tell me they had a wildlife garden, full of brambles. Now people will say they are 're-wilding' their lawn. They have planted it with non-native plants and only cut it once a year. That isn't a wild, or even 're-wilded' habitat.

So what is re-wilding? Well, I can tell you what it is not.

Councils need to reduce their expenditure on planting schemes and grass-cutting. To do a bit less will certainly help in their response to the climate emergency and reduce their carbon footprint. However, the swathes of colourful cornfield annuals planted along roadsides and roundabouts are not 're-wilding'. There is nothing wild about them and this kind of informal planting is arguably just as cultivated, and can be just as environmentally insensitive as bedding plants and tulips, even if a bit less labour-intensive. Some people even promote these as 'wildflower meadows' when they are neither native wild flowers nor meadows (which is grassland cut for hay). I love gardens and gardening



and I love the colourful displays of flowers these produce - but re-wilding, it ain't!  
Roundabouts were never wild in the first place!

North Somerset Council is committed to 're-wilding'. The intention is to plant 50,000 additional trees and to relax the mowing on some areas of community grass. This is very good news for wildlife. Insects need trees and our bats and birds need insects. Any additional native trees planted will also eventually improve air quality near roadsides and, importantly, lock up carbon as they grow, taking carbon dioxide out of the air. The council says it will plant trees mainly along existing woodland and allow the wild flowers, insects and animals to spread out into the new areas.

The council has also said it wants to reduce how often it mows some areas of amenity grass. As well as saving the carbon dioxide emissions and reducing their use of fossil fuels, taller grass is a valuable habitat so this will be an improvement for biodiversity. Some areas now mown grass will be left uncut to allow natural succession - the areas will scrub over and eventually turn to woodland. In other places the council intends to try to establish wild flower meadows.

I think we should welcome this change in attitude. We can all help with the transition period by taking opportunities to explain to our more sceptical neighbours all the benefits for our health and well-being and calm any fears about rats, ticks, mosquitoes and other predicted 'problems'. If you would like to get involved in the implementation of North Somerset's re-wilding, please email [rewilding.volunteering@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:rewilding.volunteering@n-somerset.gov.uk). On Tuesday 19th February at 10am meet by Brunel Way off Arnolds Way to get involved with planting Yatton's 116 tree contribution to the project.

YACWAG has a more 'purist' approach to re-wilding. We would like to see our fields return to the diverse and rich grasslands they would have been before the Enclosure Acts and so-called improvements in farming and drainage. Those 'improvements' on a national scale began to drive many kinds of wildlife away and, more recently, have contributed to the decline in soil health and the extinction and serious decline in farmland birds.

YACWAG's income from its Higher Level Stewardship scheme has now ceased and its replacement scheme will not match the level of income we have had for the last ten years. We have considered a scenario where we might let nature take its course in some of our fields. This might become a reality if it becomes difficult to find graziers who will meet our requirements, or if disposing of the hay becomes too expensive. The good thing about this kind of 're-wilding' is that it costs nothing and nature will use the fields no matter whether they turn to scrub, marsh or reedbeds. Different species would benefit from this kind of wilder landscape, and ultimately, if needs must, it is always an option.

YACWAG has been approached by many local people about tree planting on our land. This has been difficult because most of our fields are on wetland SSSIs where tree planting is not welcomed by Natural England as it could be detrimental to the special wildlife interest. However, we have identified a small area - the small field of Kenn Moor Reserve, just beyond the housing in Kenn Moor Road - and our intention is to plant a traditional apple orchard in this field next winter. Natural England is happy with our plans and we believe the orchard will be welcomed by local residents who are facing the loss of the orchard opposite at The Grange if planning permission is finally given on that site. Fruit orchards are great for wildlife, and while it is far from re-wilding, orchards are traditional in the landscape and the trees will eventually lock up carbon as well as providing habitat. We also intend to plant some trees in the centre of our fields on Congresbury Moor and a new oak tree at Harry's Plot off Claverham Close. We will keep members informed of our plans.

## Bird News from Trevor Riddle

It has been a very quiet season for our winter birds probably due to the very mild winter and, in my view climate change, causing some of our winter visitors to spend their winters further north. This isn't (yet) proven scientifically but I have never seen so few fieldfares, redwings or meadow pipits on our local moors and anecdotal and circumstantial evidence from around the country backs up this suggestion.

In contrast, birds in gardens seem to have, if anything, increased with blue, great and long-tailed tits, goldfinches and perhaps less welcome garden birds such as wood pigeons and jackdaws becoming more numerous. The tit species have benefitted from a dry nesting season followed by a mild winter.



*A kingfisher has been seen regularly in Congresbury  
Photo: Higgy*

Winter thrushes have been scarce along the Strawberry Line where perhaps most interest has been at Moor Drove bridge with a regular kingfisher and up to three goosanders on the river. The Cetti's warblers sang at times but there were no reports of water rail, perhaps another species not heading this far south.

Littlewood hosted at least one great spotted woodpecker and treecreepers have been seen from time to time. The goldfinch flock reached 75 birds but again there were no siskins or redpolls and no woodcock either.

There were few snipe on Congresbury Moor, but Kenn Moor Reserve held 62 plus two jack snipe in December. Surprisingly, in view of the wet weather, four barn owls were roosting on YACWAG Reserves with another in a YACWAG sponsored box nearby.

There were several reports of marsh tits at Cadbury Hill and by January nuthatches were calling stridently.

Treecreeper, both species of woodpecker and song thrushes were also present.

Looking at the Congresbury and Yatton local area a flock of 400 lapwings on a slurried field in the Wemberham area was a welcome sight. Peregrines (occasionally two) perched on pylons, kestrels were seen sporadically and most sparrowhawk sightings came from members' gardens. Wemberham Lane had resident stonechats and kingfisher with a pair of mistle thrushes on one visit. In January song thrushes announced their presence and numbers do appear to be creeping upwards. A few members recorded calling tawny owls.



*Nuthatches are resident on Cadbury Hill and can be heard calling stridently  
Photo: Higgy*

Trevor is always pleased to hear from members with their bird sightings or queries. You can email him direct at [trid@btinternet.com](mailto:trid@btinternet.com).

# Pumpkin Trail at Middlecombe Nursery Aids YACWAG Bat Work

YACWAG members all know that bats are not scary at all, but they are nonetheless traditionally associated with Halloween.

In October YACWAG was approached by Middlecombe Nursery to put up a display about bats to go with their Halloween Pumpkin Trail. This seemed an excellent idea and we were able to share information about YACWAG's Batmap Project and the Greater Horseshoe Bats that are so special in Congresbury and the surrounding area.

Those who popped along to enjoy the trail will agree that it was a beautifully presented display of pumpkins very cleverly carved by individuals, community groups and businesses, enhanced by a lovely seasonal planting scheme.

Donations made by visitors to the trail amounted to the generous sum of £336, which will be used to further our bat work.



# YACWAGger Profile - Viv French

*Viv French is YACWAG's Treasurer and a Trustee of the charity - for the second time. She enjoyed the role the first time round, a decade ago, but had to quit when her work became more demanding. When the Treasurer's post became vacant again, Viv decided it was something she knew about and enjoyed, so she felt she could use her skills again for YACWAG's benefit. She is a professional book-keeper and says she enjoys making the financial side of YACWAG trouble-free and is not into work creation!*

*Viv has been an invaluable help to the committee in the past few years as she has brought her thoroughly professional approach to the updating of YACWAG's financial systems to meet the requirements of the Charity Commission and has got budgetary control in line with good business practice.*

*Viv is also an avid conservation volunteer with YACWAG and with several other local conservation organisations, enjoying the opportunity to get outside and enjoy nature.*



## **How did you first get involved with YACWAG?**

I moved out to Shipham from Weston-super-Mare and wanted to get involved in some outdoor, active volunteering. VANS (Voluntary Action North Somerset) offered me only one opportunity - YACWAG. I had already done some conservation work when I lived in Bristol and knew I liked it.

## **What do you like about conservation work?**

I like working outside and am passionate about nature - I want wildlife to survive and am upset by its destruction. I am not great at recognising different birds or identifying trees and butterflies so helping with conservation work makes me feel I can still be useful even if I am not very knowledgeable.

## **What do you like about YACWAG?**

I was made to feel very welcome from the start. I liked the group's inclusiveness and the way I could get involved in anything. No-one made me think I wasn't capable of doing anything and I was able to go to bat training, learn how to dissect owl pellets - it was all available even to me!

I loved the work parties we used to have regularly on Saturday afternoons. They were so enjoyable - the sun used to shine and the company was great. Work parties are still great fun and I love the sense of welcomeness and friendliness. My favourite thing is to be out on a sunny Sunday morning doing a bird survey. There are so many lovely birds around on the Strawberry Line and I am glad I have good hearing.

**What could YACWAG do better?**

YACWAG doesn't seem to have much of a voice locally. I am dismayed that many people still don't realise how bad things are in the environment and I would like YACWAG to be involved in reaching people and encouraging them to do more.

Tony has set a gold standard in terms of the committee's practice. I would like to see a similar high standard in having a voice. I would like people to be galvanised to change their ways, but it is difficult because people are put off if we come across as too earnest and pushy. However, I would like YACWAG to reach out more to the community and get more people living in a way that benefits the environment.

I am conscious of the fact that I joined YACWAG quite late in life and I knew nothing. I still know almost nothing, but I am going out doing bird surveys, otter surveys, bumblebee surveys. We need more volunteers for this important work. We need to know what is going on with our local wildlife. I think people sometimes feel they don't know enough but I am the living proof that you don't need to know anything; you can just do the paperwork or hold the clipboard. It is still a very helpful thing to do.

**I usually ask people where YACWAG will be in ten years time...**

I can't imagine what the world will be in ten years time. I don't even know if we will be here in ten years. I don't really want to think about it. I will just enjoy my time with YACWAG and do what I can to help.

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## Alan Walker Thanked for his High Quality Barn Owl Boxes



Alan Walker made YACWAG's first barn owl box in 2000 and three more in 2019 (with others in between). Alan was awarded with a unique personalised mug by YACWAG Chairperson Tony Moulin in recognition of the huge part he has played in YACWAG's barn owl breeding success.

In 2019 new barn owl boxes were put up to replace three that had rotted away. The new boxes are made of more durable materials and it is hoped they will last to the end of the decade.



## Yatton Juniors' Learning College

It has become a regular occurrence for YACWAG to help provide opportunities for Yatton school pupils to learn about wildlife at their extra-curricular Learning College.

Last term we were grateful to Chloe Brown for her help leading two sessions. (She says she knows a lot more about bats now!)

The photo on the right shows Faith helping with owl pellet dissection in the class-room - always a favourite!

Trevor Riddle and his team have also been into the school to check the bird boxes with a small group of children.



*Photo: Jon Heywood, Yatton Junior School*

## Fundraising Quizzes at the Plough

YACWAG has a long history of fundraising through general knowledge quizzes. We are grateful for the support of the landlord of the Plough Inn at Congresbury and the many local residents who take part in the weekly community quizzes, benefitting a variety of local causes.

In the last five years alone the quizzes held in aid of YACWAG have raised over £1500. Two quizzes in aid of YACWAG are planned this year – the first on Sunday 23rd February and the second on Sunday 27th September starting at 8.30pm prompt. Entry to the quiz is £1 per person. Teams between four and six can be made up on the night so if you want to meet other YACWAG members this is a good opportunity. A raffle is always held and Win Lowman would be grateful for donations of prizes – chocolate and wine are always very popular! Many thanks to Graham Lovesey who has been our Quizmaster for the past couple of years.

## Membership Subs Due 1st March

It's the time of year to renew your membership to YACWAG. This is important if you want to continue to receive the newsletter and emails from Win to let you know what is going on. Due to data protection legislation we cannot hold your contact details on our database unless you are a member, so please pay your dues, either through the website via Paypal, by bank transfer, or by cheque or cash to 22 Chescombe Road, Yatton, or at any events coming up. It remains a tremendous bargain at £4 per annum for a single person, £7 per household. Life membership is available at £100 for a household, £75 single.



# YACWAG and the Arts in 2020

Lots of opportunities to get involved and be entertained!

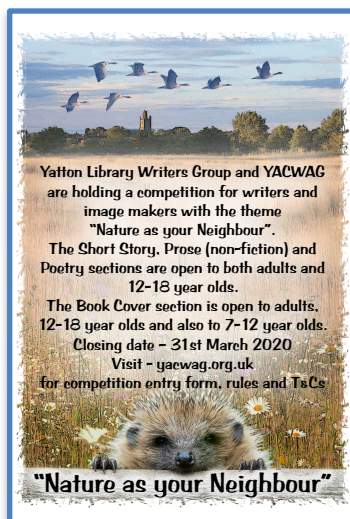
YACWAG is having a bit of an arty year with activities to entertain our members and celebrate the inspiring connection of Nature with Art. Here are some dates for your diary. Information about tickets and further information will come later.

On the evening of **Saturday 16th May** at Claverham Village Hall there will be a concert with the entertainment provided by Cadbury Sax Band. The event is a joint fundraiser for the band and YACWAG and will feature a variety of types of music. Dave James, the band leader and founder, wanted half the proceeds of their special 20th anniversary concert to go to an environmental cause - and what better than the one on his doorstep! There will be a raffle (donation of prizes welcome), light refreshments (please offer to make a cake) and information about YACWAG's work. Win ([yacwag@gmail.com](mailto:yacwag@gmail.com)) would also be glad to hear from anyone who would help clear and clean up at the end of the evening. Tickets will be £10 each, children free.



At 7pm on **Friday 12th June**, at St Barnabas Church, Claverham, there will be an evening of 'Words and Pictures'. This will be a preview of art for sale the next day and a reading of winning entries and award of prizes in the YACWAG/Yatton Library Writers Group competition on the theme of *Nature As Your Neighbour*. Entry will be by ticket only and will include a drink and nibbles. **If you take wildlife photographs, or make artwork in any medium on the theme of nature we would love to display your work at this event, whether for sale or not.** On **Saturday 13th June** anyone can drop in anytime during the day to the church to see (and buy) artworks, including placing sealed bids for original watercolours of wildlife commissioned by YACWAG from Richard Briggs of Portishead. Richard is better known for his vivid paintings of buildings and his work is on sale in the Houses of Parliament shop, the Oxford University shop, tourist offices, galleries, cathedrals and card shops. Other wildlife art will be on display, including Higgy's beautiful photographic images, also available on greetings cards. There will also be art activities inspired by nature for children and adults. (If you could help staff this event for an hour or two during the day, we would be very grateful for volunteers.)

You have until **31st March** to enter the 'Words and Pictures' competition. If you, or anyone you know, can write a poem, a piece of prose about wildlife, or a short story on the theme *Nature As Your Neighbour*, please do enter. There are cash prizes for the winning entries which will be bound in a book. The rules and an entry form are on YACWAG's website or available in Yatton Library. During April children's illustrations for the cover of the anthology will be on display in Yatton Library and we will be asking you to go into the library and vote for the winner.



In September, again in Claverham, we hope to be showing a special film of our reserves through the seasons. More on that film night later.

As with all our events we would ask you to walk or cycle if you can, and if you have to drive, please consider filling your car with passengers.

## Littlewood's Top Twenty Birds

Visitors to Littlewood in September were able to learn more about this fascinating 'little wood' and in particular about the birds that live there.

John Croxton and Trevor Riddle had set out a trail of 20 birds special to Littlewood in some way - one for every year of YACWAG's existence - and were able to show members the 19th century plantation and its veteran alder trees, some of them over 200 years old.



## Yeo Valley Lions Community Orchard

YACWAG has been helping the Yeo Valley Lions with their project to set up a community orchard at Hangstones. Yatton Parish Council has given permission for nine fruit trees to be planted and looked after by members of the community. The trees will provide habitat for wildlife, especially insects, as well as enhancing an under-used area of the playing field. In due course fruit will be available from the trees for the community. Planting trees also helps the community respond to the climate emergency. YACWAG is also involved with a project to plant trees at Yatton Youth Club.

There will be more about the opportunity to sponsor a tree in our proposed traditional apple orchard at our Kenn Moor Reserve in our next issue.

## Harry's New Oak

Off Claverham Close is a portion of a field left to YACWAG by the late Harry Hailes. Before he died he discussed with Tony his wish to plant another oak tree in the field. At a recent meeting with the other owners of the field, it was agreed that a third oak tree could be planted to commemorate YACWAG's 20th birthday between the two oaks already there, which are probably about 100 years old. It is also good news that the group of owners has agreed to give over the northernmost portion of the field for more tree planting.

## Make Yatton Greener

YACWAG has accepted the challenge to help people in Yatton go green. The network of people working on the project is producing a calendar of themes for the year, ranging from Wildlife to Transport, with ideas that everyone can take up to 'make Yatton greener.'

## Number 1 of a New Series about YACWAG's Fields: Footmead

One day in 2007 Tony and I were walking down Gangwall, an ancient flood defence and public footpath linking Yatton with Hewish, when we spotted a FOR SALE sign. The field in question was up for auction with David James, estate agent. It was a two acre field owned by the Bristol Society of Friends. Tony and I knew it from long ago, and we knew it was one of the most interesting fields on the moor.



*Footmead December 2007, looking west towards Gangwall*

The south ditch had been full of uncommon wild flowers in the 1980s and we knew that English Nature had scored it highly when the Biddle Street SSSI was declared in 1994. I had happy memories of wild flower hunting there and taking our children to 'pond dip' in the rhyes among the ragged robin. Indeed I had good cause to remember this particular field as in February 1981, our children dipping nets in the water, Tony with his camera, my eyes scanning the landscape, our middle son Chris, about eight, shouted loudly. We all watched in horror as his three-year-old brother, Daniel, silently slipped forward into the cold water and lay motionless face down. Tony didn't hesitate, jumping straight in, camera round his neck, pulling Daniel out by the scruff of his coat. The shivering started at once in the icy February air and we wrapped Daniel in our coats and ran all the way home. Tony had been in the bottom stinky silt up to his thighs. So, yes, I remember the field well.

We used to spend quite a lot of time in fields near the disused railway line we now know as the Strawberry Line. Farmers were happy for us to pick blackberries, collect tadpoles or take photographs of wild flowers. No-one ever thought of this as 'trespass'. We weren't doing any harm and it was a traditional community use of local fields. Things have changed round here nowadays and I think fewer people feel comfortable about roaming over farmers' fields without permission, and fewer farmers are happy about the growing numbers of strangers around their land and livestock. Sadly, they often have good reason. There are also fewer tadpoles and, for a variety of reasons, fewer wild flowers - apart from in YACWAG's own fields!

The Society of Friends had purchased Footmead from the Church of England Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1856 and had taken an annual haycut from it or let it as pasture. After 150 years it had ceased to provide a reliable income for charitable works, particularly since the change in surrounding land ownership which made it harder to rent out, so they had decided to sell. We knew it would be a great addition to YACWAG's landholding and that it would not sell for a huge sum because of the poor access through rented land that was, and remains, very hard to cross. Tony managed to convince the Quakers that it would be appropriate for the land to continue in charitable ownership. YACWAG was ready and waiting to buy it and hold it in perpetuity for the community. The Quakers withdrew the field from auction and agreed to sell to YACWAG. It was bought for £4000 plus the vendor's legal costs, from YACWAG funds.



*Footmead's access is difficult to negotiate in wet weather*

Footmead is managed by an annual hay cut taken after mid July in order to allow plants to set seed and some invertebrates to complete their life cycles. Sometimes the field is grazed by cattle and sheep after the hay has been cut. The margins of the field are left long as a refuge for wildlife.

By 2010 the ditches around the field (which is effectively moated) had been cleared and the spoil which had been left as bare earth on the margins had given rise to a varied crop of wild plants, one of which is pictured below and a further four are highlighted on the next page.

Tubular water-dropwort, *Oenanthe fistulosa*, is a scarce local plant in rhynes and shallow water in North Somerset. Its hollow stems and small fine leaves are greyish-green and very easy to miss among other vegetation. The delicate creamy flowers in June are in umbels at the top of the flower stem.

In 1912 the plant was known as 'common water dropwort' and White, in his Flora of Bristol, says it is 'very common throughout the lowlands, from Portishead and Clevedon to the southern limit of the district.' Nowadays we are excited to see it in YACWAG reserves.





On the left, Ragged robin, *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, which grows on Footmead's ditch edges. Slender flowering stems allow these bright pink flowers to peep out in May and June above long grass in marshes and wet meadows. Each petal is divided into four thin segments, giving a ragged appearance. The flowers are often pollinated by the green-veined white butterfly.

On the right, Yellow Loose-strife, *Lysimachia vulgaris*. This scarce plant surprised us when clumps of it appeared strongly on the banks of Footmead's ditches. Its local stronghold is in YACWAG's Stowey Reserve and we knew only one plant on the clay to the south of Yatton. The flowers are scentless and contain no nectar but are pollinated by small wasps.



Greater bird's-foot-trefoil, *Lotus pedunculatus*, is shown on the left. Similar to the more abundant Bird's-foot-trefoil, (often known as 'bacon-and-eggs') a plant of drier habitats, this species is hairier and taller and only grows in damp grassland.

In Footmead this plant is abundant and provides food for common blue butterfly caterpillars.

The Branched bur-reed, *Sparganium erectum*, on the right is a relatively common plant of mud or shallow water in the Biddle Street SSSI. In the summer they are noticeable by their stiff zig-zag flower spikes. The flowers themselves are inconspicuous in round heads but when they are in fruit, the gathered seeds, or 'burs' make them more visible. The iris-like leaves in clumps make good shelter for snipe and other wild fowl.





Almost all of our fields on Congresbury Moor have barn owl nestboxes. This gives the owls choice and sometimes encourages more than one nesting pair to succeed. Male barn owls do not share the nest with mother and eggs, so a nest box on a pole also provides the male with a safe place to roost.

In July 2016 Trevor was delighted to discover a barn owl nest in the box at Footmead. Chris Sperring of the Hawk and Owl Trust has been a huge support with YACWAG's work with barn owls and he was coming to look at the nest under licence and check on the health and size of the chicks. Knowing how well fed the owlets are gives YACWAG the feedback we need to make decisions about our field management. We want to make sure the conditions are right for a steady 'crop' of small mammals. At this visit the owlets are also fitted with a leg ring so that they can be identified should they ever turn up in the future.

On this occasion, as Footmead is within walking distance of Yatton Junior School, and for once the mud on the way to it had hardened, we quickly got in touch and the school chose six pupils to come and see the owls at close quarters. We hope this gave them an unforgettable experience.

In 2020 we are planning further ditch work in Footmead, clearing scrub from the south side to allow more light to get to the water. Tadpoles and sticklebacks are still living in the ditches, otters, hares, roe deer and foxes pass through and we hope that YACWAG's non-intensive management will continue to improve the habitat for a greater variety of wildlife.

*Faith Moulin*

PHOTOS, ARTICLES AND ANYTHING ELSE OF INTEREST are always welcome for the YACWAG newsletter, and your feedback is appreciated.

Please contact the editor at [yacwag@gmail.com](mailto:yacwag@gmail.com).