

11th AGM report

There was a very good turnout for our AGM last November. We got the business part out of the way early, electing James Otway as our new chair, David Phillips as our new secretary, and Carole Nicholson as a new committee member. Ben Drummond and Jean Stewart continue as Vice-Chair and Treasurer, respectively. Lynn Baxter, Marie Bullough, Tony Hutson, Kate Gold, and Jacqui Hutson make up the rest of the committee.

Our retiring Chair, Jacqui Hutson, then reported on PECWG activities in 2019:

The toad crossing on Plumpton Lane at the sandpit entrance was patrolled on 10 evenings between early February and early March. A total of 142 live toads were assisted across the road but 36 were found dead. Grateful thanks are due to all the toad patrollers. Our nightingale evening in April was a great success with two birds in full song. Thanks to Jean and Peter Stewart for the excellent refreshments. The East Chiltington Trust (TECT) is managing its field with wildlife in mind. We helped with a base-line botanical survey in July. On 7 September, 29 people used bat detectors to survey the field and adjacent Hollycroft field. At least five species of bats were identified and a roost in a tree was located. A full report is in preparation. Dormouse surveys continue in East Chiltington and there is evidence of a viable population in one wood. The results of the survey of the woodlands of Plumpton Parish that we carried out between 2014 and 2016 is now available as a full-colour booklet. We are grateful to Plumpton Parish Council for its financial contribution to printing costs. East Chiltington churchyard is being managed for wildlife and we have recently helped to clear the rear churchyard of All Saints and will be involved in preparing a management plan that will meet the needs of both people and wildlife. Our relationship with Plumpton College continues to develop, particularly through our membership of its Environmental Steering Group. As part of this initiative we are planning bat, bird and plant surveys. We continue to monitor five plots on the College Estate for the National Plant Monitoring Scheme and we have been able to involve student participation in these. One of our objectives is to 'promote the understanding, appreciation and conservation of the fauna and flora of the two parishes'. To this end we continue to produce monthly contributions to the Plumpton & East Chiltington News, have kept our website up to date and welcomed posts and queries on our Facebook Group. We also ran our first photographic competition, inviting images of wildlife taken in the two parishes. There was a very good response with 63 images submitted to our website. The wide range of subjects, from garden birds - including sparrow hawks and their prey - to grass snakes, spiders, trees, butterflies and bees highlights the richness of our local wildlife. We thank James Honess of the Plumpton Camera Club for judging the competition. The winner was Beth Bowen for a beautifully composed and detailed image of a bumble bee. All of the entries can be viewed on our website <https://plumptonwildlifegroup.weebly.com/photo-competition.html>

We then moved onto the highlight of the evening, an illustrated talk on the Hazel Dormouse, from Kim Dawson, Community Ranger with Lewes District Council. Kim is a licensed dormouse handler and has assisted with our dormice surveys in East Chiltington.

The Big Garden Birdwatch 2020

The RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch (www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch/) takes place between Saturday 25th and Monday 27th January 2020. Spend an hour watching the birds in your garden and report to the RSPB the maximum number of each species that you see at any one time. As always, Tony Hutson will be collecting and analysing records from Plumpton and East Chiltonton so please copy your sightings to him (01273 890341, hutson.t@btinternet.com) so that we can continue to build up a picture of our local garden birds.

Kate Gold