



13th AGM Report

A big thanks to all who attended. A talk was given by Dr Steph Murphy, the Ecology Divisional Director of the Temple Group, on the subject of 'Wildlife in the Planning Process'. James Otway reported on the activities of the Group over the last 12 months:

Chair's Report Monday 8th November 2021

Welcome everyone. What a difference a year makes! The peace and quiet of the locked down countryside quickly returned to the normal hustle and bustle.

In fact in some respects it seemed much worse as we were denied the option of travelling beyond our local neighbourhood and the countryside took the full brunt of the 1.5 million people that live in East and West Sussex. Spring 2021 gave us over a month of much colder weather and less sunshine than 2020 with a noticeable affect on blossom, insects and bird behaviour making everything appear much later.

Jean and Peter Stewart hosted a Nightingale /sausage walk over the fields to Streat on the 30th April. Nightingales did sing.

The Wildlife Group had a table at the Strawberry Fayre. The tree leaf identification quiz was interesting and very few got all the answers correct. Tony Hutson brought bat poo in bags and actually managed to sell it for money!

We were able to continue with our Dormouse survey around the Novington Estate, thanks to Henrietta Dickinson for permission and Kim Dawson for her time. We found evidence of Dormice and a Dormouse itself. There is tube maintenance to be carried out before next spring and monitoring continues.

All the disease resistant Elms planted have survived and thrived.

We are about to start a Harvest Mouse survey of suitable sites within the parishes. We were given an introduction to Harvest Mouse hunting by Frazer Coomber from the Mammal Society at the Knepp estate last month at which we discovered that our honourable Secretary David Phillips is a natural mouse hunter finding 4 of the 10 nests on that day. This winter we will be looking through hedgerows and tussocky grassy places for their nests.

Jacqui Hutson and Kate Gold have continued with the National Plant Monitoring scheme on 5 plots within a 1 kilometre square plot around Plumpton College on behalf of the Group.

Tony has provided us with the badger set map so the badger survey can continue.

The Group met with Jeremy Kerswell at Plumpton College in May to discuss the college plans regarding habitat/wildlife management on the college estate and how we can work together on future projects. We have been delighted to help interpret a more sympathetic management of St Michael's churchyard along with Alex Waterfield, head of Grounds and Gardens, that we hope to see adopted by the PCC.

The college also invited us to visit the One Garden Project at Stanmer Park. Well worth a visit.

We helped at the "Churches count on Nature" last June to encourage visitors to the churchyards to identify plants they found and have continued to provide advice and encouragement to the PCC regarding All Saints and East Chiltington churchyard management, including some coppicing at East Chiltington and maintenance of wildflower areas.

I was thrilled to see that the Swift caller at All Saints attracted the attention of live Swifts so fingers crossed that we may be on their radar when they return next year.

We have given advice to the Parish Council regarding the possible siting of the Community Orchard.

Finally, thanks again to the departing members of the Committee and we look forward to working with 3 new members this coming year.

The 2022 RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch takes place on 28-30 January. For details on how to take part, go to <http://www.rspb.org.uk>. Tony Hutson also collates the results for Plumpton so please email them to him at hutson.t@btinternet.com or ring 01273 890341