



## **14th AGM report**

Our AGM was held on 9th November. Here are the edited highlights of the chair's report:

“After initial training from the Mammal Society at Knepp Castle in Autumn 2021, we ventured into harvest mouse surveying and went on to discover 34 harvest mouse nests on 6 sites in the two Parishes. The only previous recorded evidence of harvest mice was a jawbone found in an owl pellet some years ago by Tony Hutson.

We continued dormouse surveying around Novington Estate and Wootton Shaw.

The largest area of habitat in the Parishes is the Blackcap SSSI nature reserve managed by the National Trust. We arranged two working parties to help the NT ranger with scrub clearance and also helped clear and burn brash after contractors had felled diseased ash trees through Ashcombe Bottom.

In early May Jean and Peter Stewart kindly hosted a hot dog supper prior to a nightingale walk along the bridleway from Shergolds. Despite the cold we did indeed hear nightingales singing along the railway line. The following Sunday we held a dawn chorus walk from Odintune through East Chiltington and were lucky to hear nightingales at both Novington and the Grange. We also carried out a nightingale survey in the Novington quadrant and recorded two nesting pairs on behalf of the Sussex Ornithological Society.

We took part in the enjoyable Jubilee weekend pageant and celebration at the race course where our stall attracted great interest. We recruited new members and our harvest mouse and wildflower wheelbarrow squeaked into third place in the best float competition!

We provided advice to Alex Waterfield, the grounds manager at Plumpton College, in developing a more sympathetic church yard management plan for St Michaels. This year, St Michaels church yard looked wonderful. We recorded common spotted orchids for the first time and were delighted to see a large hen grass snake basking beneath the outside tap in the morning sun in May.

The nightjar walk on Red House Common on a gorgeous evening in late June was a success and we were rewarded with a flying display of nightjars and a good view of the birds perching and calling.

We arranged a pond dipping evening with the cubs and scouts in the middle of the driest summer on record! Despite this we did some simple tree and plant identification and look forward to working with the cubs and scouts on future events.

Tony Hutson arranged a bat walk on a fine dry calm evening in August at St Michaels. The primary objective was to see if any bats were emerging from the church at dusk ie: were using the church as a day roost. There was evidence in the church of serotine bats towards the west end of the nave, a long-eared bat in the aisle and a common pipistrelle was flying in the nave and chancel. At dusk, three groups with bat detectors recorded serotine, pipistrelle and brown long eared bats outside the church.

Moth trapping events were organised throughout the summer and a late autumn. During the September session at the Old Mill House, 46 species, including a Portland Ribbon Wave, were recorded from two traps.

Finally, I'm very sorry that Jacqui Hutson has stood down from the Wildlife Group Committee, after many years. She has been the most dedicated member of the Group, along with her husband Tony, and we will greatly miss her steady hand and incredible knowledge”.

Our own Dr Simon Harding then gave an illustrated talk about his recent work looking at the monetary, subsistence, and sociocultural value of marine resources to coastal communities in the Pacific Islands. This research is crucial to help design locally meaningful and sustainable management approaches for marine and coastal habitats.

## **Big Garden Birdwatch**

The 2023 RSPB BGBW takes place on 27-29 January. For details on how to take part, go to <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>. Tony Hutson collates the results for Plumpton so please email your sightings to him at [hutson.t@btinternet.com](mailto:hutson.t@btinternet.com) or call 01273 890341

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