



# **Wild Colerne Annual Report** 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023

## **About Wild Colerne**

Wild Colerne (Charity number 1197970) was formally established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2022 with the following objectives agreed with the Charity Commission:

To promote, for the benefit of the public, the conservation, protection, and improvement of the natural environment in Colerne parish by:

1. Enhancing habitats for native wildlife, including its flora, fauna and other taxa to promote biodiversity.
2. Providing information to raise public awareness of the magnitude and causes of biodiversity loss.
3. Promoting actions to mitigate biodiversity loss and the impact of climate change on the natural environment.
4. Facilitating community support for biodiversity protection by promoting nature themed activity.

## **Our Current Trustees are:**

Dorothy Robertson (Chair)  
Ian Butterworth (Treasurer and Data Protection)  
Duncan Robertson (Secretary)  
Mike Rogers (Safeguarding)  
Chris Woods  
Keith Mortimer

As this is the first year of operation, there is no requirement for Trustees to stand down and all are willing to remain as Trustees. If anyone is interested in becoming a Trustee, please contact us at [info@wildcolerne.com](mailto:info@wildcolerne.com)

## **Our Steering Committee members are the Trustees plus:**

Karen Brzezcki  
Catherine Dixon  
Rachael Dutton  
Jane Mellet  
Clive Spencer

## Background and Overview of Aims

The concept of Wild Colerne arose from informal conversations on local walks. The network of footpaths through our lovely countryside became a lifeline during the Pandemic. How could that connection and the mental health benefits of noticing and being in nature be preserved as the business of more normal life returned?

Wild Colerne is about celebrating the beauty of our surroundings and wildlife and having fun! We aim to make it easy for people with an interest in nature to connect and share knowledge and enthusiasm.

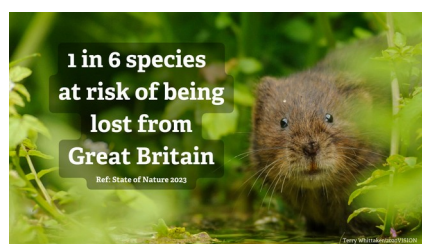
But there is a serious side. The natural environment around us is changing. An important remit of our charity is to highlight what is happening nationally, to monitor how our local wildlife is faring and work with the Community on how best to protect and create more space for nature. Our youngsters are growing up in a nature-depleted world – we want to reverse that.

Some facts that disturb us:

1 in 6 species is at risk of being lost from the UK.

- We have 73 million fewer breeding birds than in 1970,
- 80% of butterfly species have decreased in abundance and or distribution, since the 1970s; flying insects have declined by 60% since 2004,
- Hedgehogs: 95% decline since 1950s, Toads: 70% reduction over the last 30 years,
- A quarter of our mammals are at risk of extinction, and we have lost half of our hedgerows since 1945.

We are inspired by Frank Entwistle whose foresight gave Colerne Parish the legacy of 'Frank's Wood.'



## Membership and Communications

Wild Colerne Facebook: 219 members

Wild Colerne email list: 120 people

Subscription paying members: 23

As well as Facebook, Wild Colerne has Instagram and Tik Tok accounts (new). We are grateful to Colerne Parish Magazine for giving us space for articles and to advertise our activities.

Our website **wildcolerne.org** went live over this Summer. It includes lots of wildlife information, tips on making a difference, an Events Diary, Photo

Gallery, Nature News and Nature's Calendar blogs. Our Policies on Safeguarding, Inclusion, Health and Safety and Data Protection are reviewed by the Trustees each year and can be viewed via the website (or on request).

## **Links with others**

Wild Colerne is represented on the Parish Council's Working Group for Climate and Biodiversity.

We also have strong links with:

- Colerne CE Primary School's nature engagement initiatives
- Colerne St John the Baptist Eco Church work
- Wiltshire Climate Alliance
- Cotswold Wardens
- Corsham Area Hedgehog Rescue.

## **Funding support**

We are delighted to have received the following support for some of our costs:

1. The Climate Coalition: £400 to support running costs for Wild Colerne and Parish Council Great Big Green Week Events 2022.

2. Wessex Water Foundation Environmental Fund: £2,000.



*The Environment Fund supports charitable and community activities across the region that have a positive impact on the local environment. The fund is part of the Wessex Water Foundation which provides dedicated funding for projects across the Wessex Water region every year.*

Our application was for start-up funding to enable us to buy equipment such as a gazebo, bat monitors, spare binoculars, presentation boards, wildflower seeds, educational nature information sheets and to help with printing and advertising costs.

## **Events Report**

### **1. Village Hall talks**

#### **2022**

- April 6<sup>th</sup>: "Colerne Swifts – their incredible story. Stewart Owen, Bath and District RSPB.
- May 5<sup>th</sup>: "Wildflower Lawns" (with Colerne Gardening Club) Dr Kate Petty, Lecturer in Plant Science Bath Spa University.
- May 12<sup>th</sup>: The PEBBLE Project – protecting the Bybrook and its Dippers. Connor Stapleton-Goddard, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust Water Team Project.

- Sept 29<sup>th</sup>: Nature in Colerne – how can we help it thrive. Community discussion and talk. Josh Rogers. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

## 2023

- March 30<sup>th</sup>: Tracing Wiltshire's Woodland History. Euan McKenzie. Ancient Woodland Inventory Officer.
- June 16<sup>th</sup>: Pavement and roadside plants. Dave Green, Wiltshire botanist.
- October 17<sup>th</sup>: Bannerdown Common – its history, management, and wildlife. Rob Kendall Secretary and Land Manager, Batheaston Freeholders Association. Chris Woods, Local Naturalist.

## **2. Great Big Green Week Events**

2021 Sept 26<sup>th</sup>: Local Nature Day with stalls.

2022 Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>: Local Nature Day. Stalls, photographic exhibition, Frank's Wood Family Activities and Apple press.

2023 June 18<sup>th</sup>: Local Nature Day. Stalls. Churchyard Wildflower Walk photographic exhibition.

## **3. Wildlife Walks**

- 15 Birdwatch and listen walks
- 8 Tree appreciation walks
- 4 Slow nature / bug hunt walks
- 3 Wildflower walks
- 3 Butterfly walks
- 1 Bat walk
- 1 Moth Trap reveal
- Swift nest spotting.

## **4. Monthly pub socials for informal nature chat.**

## **Current Key Projects**

### **1. Swifts**

Colerne swifts' long association with our village stems from the old-style roof tiles and eaves that survive, mainly in central Colerne. Swifts are now "red listed" as an endangered species and we know from our longer-term residents that we are losing our Colerne swifts as well. New housing makes no space for them to nest, roof refurbishment often blocks nest access, and their insect food supply is dwindling.

### **What we have been doing**

#### **Raising awareness:**

- Village Hall talk "Colerne swifts - their incredible story" launched our Save Colerne Swifts project, April 2022.
- Welcome home' Ringing of the church bells by Colerne Church young bell-ringing team to celebrate our swifts return in May 22 and again this year. Many thanks to Roger Haynes and the ringers for establishing this tradition.

- Swift walks to spot and log nest sightings.
- Working with the school - The Swift Poems and Pictures booklet
- Created by children in years five and six (2021-22) at Colerne Church of England Primary School. The children wrote these poems after learning about swifts in school and we are very grateful to the teachers for their support. The booklet **contains lots of swift information** - available from Bright's Village store or via [info@wildcolerne.org](mailto:info@wildcolerne.org).
- Information leaflets and posters in shops and Colerne Cafe display.
- Information leaflets for households living in swift hotspot areas.
- Promoting swift nest boxes.
- Exploring feasibility of adding nest boxes to the Church tower. Thanks to the Church for facilitating this.
- Promoting bug friendly gardens.

## **2. Skylarks**

We are blessed by the sound of Skylarks above Armstrong's field at the back of the school, yet another iconic species on the endangered "Red list." Ground nesting birds like skylarks are particularly vulnerable to disturbance from free running dogs and walkers unaware of their presence.

### **What we have been doing**

"Skylarks are nesting in this meadow" information poster (Designed by Bob Child) has helped ensure a successful breeding season.

## **3. Hedgehogs**

Were added to the "Red List" as vulnerable to extinction in Great Britain in 2020. Our parish and gardens are an important refuge for their survival.

### **What we have been doing**

#### **Raising awareness:**

\* To celebrate Hedgehog Awareness week 30<sup>th</sup> April - 6<sup>th</sup> May, arranged for Corsham Area Hedgehog Rescue to host a stall in the Market Place, alongside a wonderful display of hedgehog drawings and information from Colerne Primary School children. Our thanks to the School.

\* Social media posts to highlight the risks they face and where to get advice.

## **4. Wildflowers and pollinators**

97% of our wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1930s and the distribution of 54% of flowering plants has shrunk since 1970.

Our insects are also in trouble - Colerne youngsters born in 2004 have seen a 64% decline in flying insects by the time they reach 18.

### **What we have been doing**



- \* Promotion of “No Mow May” and nature friendly gardening.
- \* Village Hall talks on Wildflower Lawns and Pavement Plants.
- \* Arranged a Wildflower walk in our lovely Churchyard with Wiltshire Botanist, Dave Green.
- \* Wildflower and insect themed nature stalls.
- \* Thickwood Verge volunteer clearance work to reclaim a verge previously protected for its floral diversity.
- \* Volunteer parties to rake and sow yellow rattle seeds at Watergates to encourage wildflowers. Liaising with the Parish Council for solution as failure of contractors to cut at the right time has

undermined progress, with failure of yellow rattle (known as a meadow maker as it weakens grass growth) growth and wildflowers choked by long grass and wild cherry saplings.

- \* Spring bulb planting Bath Rd.
- \* Supported a Bug hunt in the playground and bug collage workshop at Colerne Primary with local artist Marian Hill, and moth trap opening.
- \* Family Minibeast Hunt in Frank’s Wood.
- \* Moth trap reveal event after overnight moth trap-so many amazing moths!

## 5. Trees and Hedges

Our Parish has some wonderful trees - but the old adage “the best time to plant a tree is 15 years ago” has added urgency.

We have some wonderful old oak trees but, apart from in Frank’s Wood, a dearth of young new generation oak. Our lanes and green spaces and fields will be losing the shade as our Ash trees die - just as our Summers are becoming hotter. We need a plan with the principle of “right tree in the right place” and - as hedges provide a vital corridor of habitat for our wildlife - we need more!

### What we have been doing

- \* Growing saplings from seeds collected locally to provide a source of local saplings for tree and hedge planting when places identified for planting (root trainers provided via the “Copse in a Box initiative” from the Tree Council).
- \* Encouraging appreciation of trees by hosting tree walks through the seasons.
- \* Waiting for the results of Parish Council Tree survey and input from Wiltshire Council funding Tree wardens (when training complete) to be a source of volunteers.

## 6. Health of our brooks

### What we have been doing

\* River-fly Monitoring, in partnership with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. Many thanks to Saltbox Farm for facilitating. Our river fly monitor takes water samples, the numbers of eight key groups of invertebrates are counted and used to calculate a score which feeds into a national database used to monitor the health of the rivers across.

\* Took part in the Bristol Avon RiverBlitz, an annual citizen science event run by Bristol Avon Riverside Trust which provides a snapshot of water quality and ecological health in the rivers and streams across the catchment.

### **Looking to the future.**

We are actively seeking people's views and ideas to shape our programme of events and possible projects. We will be shortly circulating a poll which can be completed on-line or as paper version to help capture opinions.

## Trial Balance Report for the year ended 31/10/2023

Category	Debit (£)	Credit (£)
Equipment	595.00	0.00
Sales	0.00	40.95
Ticket Sales	0.00	230.00
Member Subscriptions	0.00	216.08
Donations	0.00	26.45
Grants	0.00	2,000.00
Product Sales	0.00	104.00
Catering Sales	0.00	62.50
Goods and Materials	76.12	0.00
Speakers / Presenters	75.00	0.00
Venue Hire	46.00	0.00
Rent	14.40	0.00
Business Rates	35.00	0.00
Internet Costs	86.84	0.00
Stationery	15.28	0.00
Business Insurance	100.80	0.00
Website & Software Costs	63.57	0.00
Stock Written Off	39.45	0.00
Co-Op Community Plus (Wild Colerne)	1,764.97	0.00
Duncan Robertson Director's Loan Account	0.20	0.00
Amount owed to suppliers	0.00	63.57
Profit & Loss Account	0.00	169.08
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2,912.63</b>	<b>2,912.63</b>