



The Cam Valley Wildlife Group Newsletter



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A new vascular plant Red List for Great Britain

A Red Data Book, or Red List, is now recognised as providing an inventory documenting the risk of extinction of all species within a taxonomic group and geographical area. The first and second Red Lists of vascular plants for Great Britain, published in 1977 and 1983, focused entirely on species which were rare (occurring in 15 or fewer 10km squares in Britain). The total of 321 taxa in the first edition included many species which are no longer considered native and some which were not threatened or declining. Subsequently the focus of British Red Data Books (RDBs) has changed: the more scientifically rigorous **threat** categories drawn up by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) are employed and Red Lists focus only on species considered to be native (including archaeophytes, which are ancient introductions). The third edition of the British Red Data Book for vascular plants, however, still only evaluated the threat level of species which were assessed as rare or scarce in Great Britain (occurring in 1-15 or 16-100 10km squares respectively).



Dyer's Greenweed at Long Dole Meadow: Helena Crouch

A different approach was taken for production of the fourth Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain, published in 2005: for the first time, the threat status was assessed for all native and archaeophyte species. As a result, it was shown that many relatively widespread taxa were undergoing serious decline. A new, fifth vascular plant Red List for Great Britain was published in November 2025. The results are distressing. Of 1720 taxa evaluated, 26% were assessed as threatened (Extinct in the Wild, Regionally Extinct, Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable) and a further 8% as Near Threatened. 285 taxa are now assessed as having a higher level of threat than in 2005; 111 have a lower threat level. In a few cases, a lower threat level may be the result of a genuine expansion of range due to climate change or deliberate introductions; for some species it is the result of improved understanding of their distribution; however, in the case of many short-lived species this could be an artefact of the

assessment criteria. Over half of British species were assessed as having a short lifespan or generation length: for these species their current distribution was compared against the distribution in the previous *Atlas of the British & Irish Flora*, published in 2002, whereas for more long-lived species their current distribution was compared against the distribution in the first Atlas, published in 1962. For the previous Red List, all species distributions were compared against the distribution in the earlier Atlas. Thus, for over half the species, the baseline distribution against which decline was assessed was different to that used for the previous Red

List: an example of Shifting Baseline Syndrome. A short-lived species which declined dramatically historically, but has been stable more recently, could therefore be assigned a lower threat level than previously.

Shockingly, the new GB Red List adds a further 70 species to the list of rare, scarce and threatened plants in Somerset which I maintain for Somerset Rare Plants Group. Information about the Somerset Rare Plant Register (RPR), and the complete table of taxa included, can be found on the SRPG website: somersestrarereplantsgroup.org.uk

From the list of additions, it is clear that species of certain habitats are faring particularly badly. Two species which are characteristic of damp meadows, Pepper-saxifrage (*Silene silaus*) and Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) were formerly considered to have a threat level of Least Concern: both are now Endangered. Dyer's Greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*), found in meadows and on road verges, has also gone from Least Concern to Endangered. Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*) and Pale Sedge (*Carex pallescens*) are now Vulnerable, and even Carnation Sedge (*Carex panicea*) is Near Threatened. All of these species formerly grew in Hollow Marsh Meadow, but Meadow Thistle was last seen there in 2010. A small patch of Meadow Thistle was still present in Long Dole Meadow in 2020, now its only site in the CVWG area.

Several previously unthreatened species of calcareous grassland are also now either Vulnerable or Near Threatened and thus added to the RPR List, including Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Salad-burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba* subsp. *sanguisorba*), Dwarf Thistle (*Cirsium acaule*), Kidney-vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) and Spring Sedge (*Carex caryophyllea*). These all grow in the CVWG area, although Kidney-vetch is possibly only native at Kilmersdon Cutting. It is frequently included in seed mixes.



Trailing St John's-wort at Deerwood Common, Wiltshire: Helena Crouch

Several of the additions are species of rock outcrops and thin soils, for example Large Thyme (*Thymus pulegioides*) and Common Thyme (*Thymus drucei*), Silver Hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllea*), Crested Hair-grass (*Koeleria macrantha*), Long-stalked Crane's-bill (*Geranium columbinum*) and Squinancywort (*Asperula cynanchica*). The decline of these species is the result of a variety of factors, including soil enrichment due to nitrogen deposition, lack of grazing and scrub encroachment. Species of thin acid soils are similarly increasingly threatened, with Early Hair-grass (*Aira praecox*) now assessed as Vulnerable, and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Trailing St John's-wort (*Hypericum humifusum*) and Heath Groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*) all Near Threatened. In the CVWG

area, most of the sites for Early Hair-grass and Sheep's Sorrel are coal batches (spoil heaps); Heath Groundsel is only known from the side of Braysdown Batch.



Marsh Marigolds in Midsomer Norton:
Helena Crouch

Some relatively widespread aquatic or marsh species are added to the Somerset RPR, including Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), now assessed as Vulnerable. This species is often planted and has been an absolute delight in Midsomer Norton High Street this Spring, flowering profusely all down the stream. It occurs naturally in the CVWG area including in Greyfield Wood and in a swamp by the disused railway between Hallatrow and Goosard.

Many plants of arable habitats had already declined catastrophically, however the new GB Red List recognises that several relatively common species of arable habitats are now also in decline, including Small Toadflax (*Chaenorhinum minus*), Small Nettle (*Urtica urens*), Henbit Dead-nettle (*Lamium amplexicaule*), Field Pennycress (*Thlaspi arvense*), Wild Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum* subsp. *raphanistrum*) and, rather surprisingly, Charlock (*Sinapis arvensis*). All of these grow in the CVWG area.

Woodland species which are increasingly threatened include Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia*) and Wood Vetch (*Ervilia sylvatica*), both of which grow in Chewton Wood. Formerly Least Concern, these are both now Vulnerable. Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*) and the dainty grass Wood Melick (*Melica uniflora*) are now Near Threatened, yet the much rarer White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*) is now Least Concern. This orchid was formerly considered Vulnerable, following a substantial decline before 2000, but is now considered stable.



Herb Paris in Harptree Combe: Helena Crouch



Betony in Hollow Marsh Meadow:
Helena Crouch

Over fifty of the species added to the Somerset RPR by the new GB Red List grow in the CVWG area. Many are species which are rare in our area, including some of those mentioned above. Others are relatively widespread, such as Charlock (*Sinapis arvensis*), Betony (*Betonica officinalis*) and Salad Burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba* subsp. *sanguisorba*). Like so many grassland species, the geographical ranges of Betony and Salad Burnet have declined, due to loss of grasslands, “improvement” of pasture, lack of grazing or scrub encroachment.

The new GB Red List was published as a special issue of *British & Irish Botany*, the online journal of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. It is free to download as a PDF at: britishandirishbotany.org/index.php/bib/issue/view/26

Helena Crouch

Adders on the Mendips



Adder (left) and Grass Snake: Diana Walker

Blackmoor Reserve is a former lead mining area in the Mendip Hills, with mixed habitats of marsh, open water, grassland, woodland and heath. This is an area I love to visit throughout the year, which includes Ubley Warren, Stockhill Wood and Priddy Mineries. Gary Kingman and I visited Blackmoor Reserve to see if we could photograph some Adders (*Vipera berus*). When we arrived there was a Post Graduate student from Chester University surveying the Adders. He was pleased to see that we planned to use long lenses to photograph the adders, so we did not get too close to them. He was capturing them so that he could check their health and releasing them again as soon as possible so as not to stress them out too much. He showed me how to sex an adder, not that I will be catching one myself!



Melanistic Adder: Diana Walker

He has been monitoring this site for 10 years and said it was one of the healthiest sites that he had covered recently in England. He was very pleased when we spotted two melanistic adders, as he had never seen more than one at a time before. I also photographed a grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) for the first time. Some of the areas on the reserve are roped off at this time of the year so that the public and their dogs would not disturb the adders. I will be back in the summer to hopefully photograph lizards and butterflies.

Diana Walker

Leave it to Beaver

Older readers may recall the American sitcom *Leave it to Beaver* from the late 1950s-early 1960s. Nowadays, though, there is a move to release real beavers in the wilds of the UK to regulate naturally our waterways with their tree-felling and dam-building activities.

You may have read about this in the media over the past year or two, but it is still startling to see first-hand the evidence of their wood-gnawing. Only time will tell whether we can indeed leave it to beavers to produce beneficial effects on our rivers.

Recently I went with two friends to walk part of the River Otter in Devon, starting on the coast at Budleigh Salterton and working our way upstream to Otterton and a little way beyond. Signs tell the walker that, despite the name of the waterway, in fact 'Beavers live here', and are breeding.

No beavers were to be seen - it was broad daylight and there were many dogwalkers along the way, so the large rodents had made themselves scarce - but their assaults upon riverbank trees soon became apparent. That this was recent activity was obvious from the woodchips on the surrounding ground, floods having clearly swept down the river during the rainfall of the past month or two.



*Sapling chiselled by beavers:
Duncan Steel*



*Tree felled by Beavers: Duncan
Steel*

Some trunks of width above six or eight inches had been chewed right through, the tree then falling, but most of the chiselling was done to saplings only an inch or two thick. One thought that came to mind was that, rather than dam-building, the principal benefit from the perspective of river management might derive from beaver-induced pollarding or coppicing, causing the trees to spread sideways along the banks, thus helping maintain the riverbanks.

Whatever might be the case, it is wonderful to see that beavers are now thriving in various parts of the country, 400 years since the original population was wiped out.

Duncan Steel

A better year for Barn Owls?



Breeding started early this year, the first egg was laid on March 23rd and 3 other owls are on eggs in our area at the present time.

Breeding depends a lot on dry warm, weather and the vole population, which is looking good out there. Hope to make up for last year, as 2025 was a very poor year all round.

The photograph is from inside a nest box, with the clutch of eggs on the left, the female in the centre and the male on the right.

I will keep everyone updated throughout the year.

Gary Kingman

Spring Members' Photos

Our members sent in some fine shots for this issue of a variety of the heralds of Spring.



Phil took this photo of what he described as a not very well-hidden blackbird's nest.

The female bird does nearly all the nest building, constructing it out of twigs, grass and other plant material. It is lined with mud and finished with a layer of fine grass. Nests are built quite close to the ground but usually better hidden than this one. A clutch of 3-5 eggs is normal. The chicks hatch after about two weeks and fledge around two weeks later.

Blackbird eggs in nest: Phil Gait



Mallard ducklings: Andrew Harrison



Egyptian Goose goslings: Frank Loughran

And after the eggs Andrew took this fine image of Mallard ducklings in the pond at Keynsham Memorial Park. Frank's picture is of Egyptian Geese and their goslings at Chew Lake. These geese are native to the Nile valley but were introduced to this country. They are members of the Shelduck family, so despite their name they are not really geese.

Nicky took this photo in early February in her High Littleton garden. She found the frogspawn jelly and eggs all over the lawn. Nicky did some research and found that when it is very wet (as it was), frogs can become confused about whether they are in the pond and will spawn on wet ground, especially if they are disturbed.

A few days later frogs did successfully spawn in the pond. She put the mis-laid spawn in the pond and it disappeared as, later, did all the tadpoles. She suspects they were eaten by the resident newts and dragonfly larvae.



Frogspawn jelly and eggs: Nicky Green



Izzy photographed these mating 7-Spot Ladybirds (*Coccinella septempunctata*) on the climbing rose on the front of her cottage. The rose suffers every year from greenfly. She has tried introducing ladybird larvae to get rid of the aphids on the climber without success, although the tactic has worked for her with other roses.

Izzy was pleased to see this pair already on the rose and is hoping they will vanquish the aphids. If they remain there is a very good chance as a female 7-spot lays up to 500 eggs. Surviving larvae will eat around 500 aphids and adults up to 5000 in their year-long life.

Mating 7-spot ladybirds: Isobel Robinson



Andrew took this picture of Moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) whilst on a CVWG work morning at Goosard Batch. (You too could bring your camera to the work mornings on the first Saturday of the month -Ed.)

Moschatel is known as 'Town Hall Clock' because the flowers face out in four directions at 90 degrees to each other, rather like the four faces of a town clock.

Moschatel: Andrew Harrison

Butterfly Transect Surveys at Haydon Batch

2024 was an extremely poor year for butterflies. Butterfly Conservation reported that it was the fifth worst year on record for the past 49 years of transect recording. Nine species had their worst year on record, even some of the most common including Small and Large Skippers, Green-veined White, Small Copper and Small Tortoiseshell.

Our 2025 surveys at Haydon Batch saw a considerable improvement over 2024. Several factors accounted for this change, firstly the hot dry summer, but also the scrub clearance and other work undertaken by the Somer Valley Rediscovered volunteers, and the greater number of surveys conducted.

However, despite the increase in abundance, the numbers seen were still lower than might be expected from such a good summer. This is in line with national results from Butterfly Conservation's various surveys and is accounted for by a knock-on effect from the extremely poor summer weather of the previous year.



The table below compares the results for the first two years. As expected on this mainly grassland site the common meadow butterflies were again the most abundant. Counts for other species were still quite low. No Dingy Skippers or Green Hairstreaks were seen but Commas and Small Coppers were additions this year, as were two summer migrants: Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady.

Painted Lady: Diana Walker

SPECIES	2024 Surveys		2025 Surveys	
	Total Count for Season	Maximum counted on a single survey	Total Count for Season	Maximum counted on a single survey
Gatekeeper	184	86	345	125
Meadow Brown	172	51	193	67
Marbled White	48	23	67	32
Small Heath	45	8	44	13
Common Blue	23	5	56	22
Large White	16	4	62	12
Orange Tip	8	3	24	9
Green-veined White	8	3	19	7
Small Skipper	14	5	12	12
Small White	5	1	18	5
Brimstone	15	4	5	3
Speckled Wood	5	2	13	3
Peacock	8	2	9	5
Large Skipper	1	1	12	10
Comma	0	0	9	6
Holly Blue	6	3	2	2
Red Admiral	3	3	4	1
Small Copper	0	0	4	3
Dingy Skipper	3	1	0	0
Clouded Yellow	0	0	2	2
Green Hairstreak	1	1	0	0
Painted Lady	0	0	1	1
Species seen	18		20	
Total	565		901	
Surveys conducted	15		21	



Comma: Diana Walker

Butterfly Conservation's UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) is celebrating its 50th anniversary. It is one of the longest running invertebrate monitoring schemes in the world. 715,000 surveys have been undertaken since 1976 by volunteers, who walked nearly a million miles to record 41 million butterflies (the Meadow Brown being the most common). The huge database has been used to help understand insect declines and changing species phenologies, and guide conservation policies. There are currently 3000 survey sites, Haydon Batch being one of the latest.

Frank Loughran and Diana Walker

Nature Notes from Spring 2025

Each day I make a nature note. Here are some from last spring.



9 March 2025 These anthills are in one of the meadows that make up the Edford Meadows Nature Reserve. It's the field that is managed as traditional pasture, grazed by cows rather than cut for hay. Each anthill is home to 10,000 or more yellow meadow ants. They are also home to plants that thrive in dry and sunny places. I found these species on one anthill today – Oxeye-daisy, Self-heal, Pignut, Glaucous Sedge, Betony, Barren Strawberry, Mouse-ear Hawkweed, Ribwort Plantain.

28th March 2025 It seems strange to think that Herons nest in trees. There are three nests in this photo taken in Swell Wood, west of Langport. You may be able to make out herons on two.

We had come to this area to look for Cranes. Hand-reared birds were released on the Somerset Levels between 2010 and 2014. Some settled in the West Sedgemoor area. Despite being very large (25% taller than a heron), they are difficult to spot as they are often in the ditches or tall vegetation. After hearing some calling, we got glimpses of heads and necks above the vegetation. No photo though.





19th April 2025 The wild pear tree on Kilmersdon Common is covered in blossom. It must be a *Pyrus communis*, rather than the truly wild species, *Pyrus pyraster*, which is thorny, much shorter and very rare. The pears grown for fruit have been bred from *Pyrus communis* rather than the thorny relative. Despite all the blossom, this tree doesn't usually have any pears. However, this year was an exception, with small hard pears on the ground in September.

28th April 2025 I've seen Mandarin Ducks on the Mells Stream by Coleford Bridge three times in 10 days. A male flew into a riverside tree on the 23rd of April, then I took this photo of a female five days later. Finally, on 1st of May, I saw a pair. These birds, that originally came from the Far East, are usually found in sheltered woodland and on small, quiet ponds or canals. So perhaps they moved on somewhere quieter to rear a family.



10th May 2025 The Hobbies arrive at Ham Wall in early May, just as the dragonflies start emerging. After the first few Hobbies, I transfer my interest to photographing the dragonflies. Today I saw Four-spotted Chasers, Hairy Dragonflies and Scarce Chasers. This is a photo of one of the Scarce Chasers. Once confined to the south east, they have expanded their range to Devon and Somerset.

23rd May 2025 I was in one of the fields east of Holcombe, looking for wildflowers and insects to photograph. I initially assumed that I had photographed a Common Blue butterfly and a mottled brown moth of some sort. However, when I got home and looked at the photos more closely, I realised that I had seen a Brown Argus butterfly (pictured) and a Dingy Skipper, within a couple of metres of each other.



Verian Conn

Members' Insect Photos



Diana spotted lots of Bloody-nosed Beetles (*Timarcha tenebricosa*) in amongst the grass when was she looking for Adders on the Mendips. It is widespread in Britain and common in some areas.

The photograph is of a female. The males have much broader *tarsi* (the segments of their feet) than the female in comparison with the leg segment preceding them. The adults are found between April and June and are active at night, usually hiding away in moss or under stones during the day.

Bloody-nosed beetle: Diana Walker

The name of this large long-legged leaf beetle relates to its behaviour. When threatened, it exudes a bright red foul-tasting fluid from its mouth, which can put off predators interested in eating it as it plods through the grass or low vegetation. It can also give a shock to a person who mistakenly thinks that they have injured it!

The adult beetle is black, usually with a bluish sheen, and flightless. Although the wing cases look like they may part for it to take flight, they are actually fused.

The larvae are black with a shiny metallic blue colour. Deborah photographed one near Claverton to the east of Bath on 7th May this year. They feed on bedstraws and related plants.

UK Beetle Recording lists the host plants as bedstraws (*Galium*), Crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*), woodruffs (*Asperula*) and madders (*Rubia*). At Claverton there were few bedstraws in evidence other than Cleavers, and it was on Cleavers that this one was spotted. However, there was lots of Crosswort in the area surveyed – a real treat!



Dock Bug: Maggie Edwards

Maggie has sent in a photograph of a Dock Bug (*Coreus marginatus*), which is one of the Squashbugs. There are some fairly similar species, but this one has several features that in combination mark it out – the large size (13 – 15 mm), the oval abdomen, and the pointed extremities to the *pronotum* (the large section from the head to the front of the wing cases). The Box Bug is slimmer; another similar species is smaller and has a diamond-shaped abdomen; another is darker, has a narrower pronotum and creamy markings on the *connexivum* (the curving wide margin of its abdomen beyond the wings and their cases) and is a bit smaller. The larvae feed on bedstraws and "related plants".

Deborah Porter

More Members' Photos



Osprey at Chew Lake: Tony Bridges

Tony Bridges took this fine photograph of an Osprey by Chew Valley Lake. at the end of March. It would be one of the migrating birds returning to nests elsewhere in the UK. Tony says that Autumn is a better time to catch these fantastic birds at the lake as they tend to stay longer than in the Spring.



Whitlowgrass: Maggie Edwards

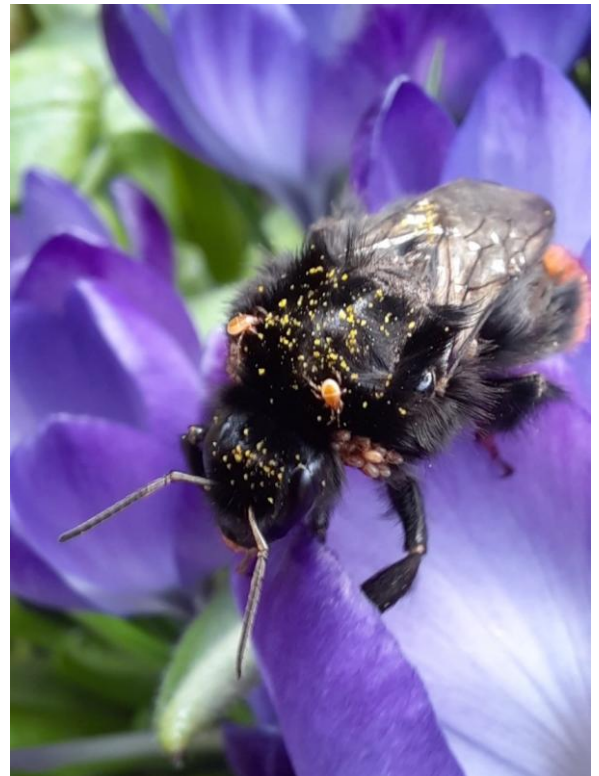
Maggie found this Common Whitlowgrass (*Erophila verna*) growing between the coping stones and the edge of her lawn in Paulton. This low growing plant with tiny flowers tends to grow in such dryer, stony places.

The name originates from its use in traditional medicine to treat whitlows – a finger infection.

Izzy spotted this Red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*) on a crocus. When she examined it more closely she could see mites on it.

She did some investigation into the mites and discovered they are harmless hitchhikers that are aiming to be taken back to the bees, usually underground, nest. Once there, they get off the bee and feed on debris on the floor of the nest.

The mites are in a mutualistic relationship with the bee as opposed to a parasitic one. Both the bee and the mites benefit from this arrangement, and neither is harmed. The mites are transported to a food source and the bumblebees get their nest cleaned, including of harmful parasites.



Bat Surveys: Correction

In Deborah Porter's article on bat surveys in the last issue, I am sorry to say that your editor made an error. The bat sonogram labelled as a Lesser Horseshoe bat was of a Greater Horseshoe bat. The angular shape of both species' sonograms are very similar but are differentiated by the almost constant frequencies of their calls: 82kHz for the Greater and 110kHz for the lesser.

Cam Valley Wildlife Group Events Programme

June to August 2026

Please contact Judy on 07460 278311 with any general queries or Diana on 07581 451805



Wednesday Evenings through to 2nd September – BOTANY WALKS

The Wednesday evening botany walks with Helena commenced on 8th April; meeting at 7 pm. Please see our website for the programme and meeting details. [Botany Walks – Cam Valley Wildlife Group](#)

Saturday 6th June – GOOSARD BATCH NATURE RESERVE work morning

Please contact Jim on 01761 410731 or by email: jim.crouch@macegroup.com to let him know who is coming so that he can plan activities. Anyone is most welcome to attend.

Thursday 11th June – trip to LANGFORD LAKES

Meet at 11.30 in the car park for a gentle walk around the lakes looking at birds, botany etc. Wiltshire Wildlife Trust reserve, Duck St, Steeple Langford SP3 4NH
Please phone Diana Walker for more information on 07581 451805 for car share

Saturday 5th July – GOOSARD BATCH NATURE RESERVE work morning

Please contact Jim on 01761 410731 or by email: jim.crouch@macegroup.com to let him know who is coming so that he can plan activities. Anyone is most welcome to attend.

Thursday 2nd July – trip to BRISTOL ZOO PROJECT

Meet at Paulton Car Park for car share at 9.30am or 10.45 at the Zoo Project BS10 7TP
Tickets are £27 (includes donation) but may change due to seasonal changes
<https://bristolzoo.org.uk/book-tickets>
Please phone Diana Walker for more information on 07581 451805 for car share

Saturday 1st August – GOOSARD BATCH NATURE RESERVE work morning

Please contact Jim on 01761 410731 or by email: jim.crouch@macegroup.com to let him know who is coming so that he can plan activities. Anyone is most welcome to attend.

August outing TBA – Suggestions welcome!

Insect/invertebrate events

If you would like to attend insect/invertebrate events and/or surveys or if you wish to be notified of upcoming insect/invertebrate walks or surveys, please send your details to Deborah via our website contact page or to camvalleywildlife@gmail.com.

Wildlife Photography

Please contact Diana on 07581 451805 or dianawalker4@gmail.com if you would like to accompany her on any of her days out photographing local wildlife.

CVWG Stalls

Saturday 4th July – Paulton Party in The Park

Saturday 11th July – Midsomer Norton Town Fayre

Date TBC - Clutton Flower Show & Village Day

Sunday 11th September – Stratton on the Fosse Village Day

If your village would like to have the CVWG stall at their village fete this summer, then please contact **Diana** at: dianawalker4@gmail.com

Gary & Diana need volunteers to help set up and take down the stall. Please phone Diana Walker on 07581 451805 if you can help.

We also need help with our website. Please get in touch if you have website development skills and are able to assist.

The next Co-ordinating Team meetings are on 14 July and 15 September.

All members are welcome to attend and contribute, please contact Jim Crouch on his email (jim.crouch@macegroup.com) for further details.

Next Newsletter: The final copy date for the next Newsletter is **29th June 2026**

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This Newsletter is published four times a year by Cam Valley Wildlife Group, an independent, volunteer-run wildlife group, covering Midsomer Norton, Radstock and surrounding villages.

To contribute articles, or provide feedback on previous articles, contact the Editor: Frank Loughran: frank.loughran7@gmail.com / 07981-788547

For further information contact Deborah Porter at camvalleywildlife@gmail.com or visit our website: <https://cvwg.org.uk>