Summary of Kirtlington Wildlife and Conservation Society activities since May 2025

KWACS concluded its 2025-26 season of evening talks on 15th April with our AGM followed by an entertaining talk by Stephen Powles entitled 'Countryside Detective'. At that meeting, the responsibility for Chair passed from the joint role undertaken by Tim Donoyou and Shelley Rowley for the last two years, to me (Christine Marsh). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tim and Shelley for the fantastic job they have done as Joint Chairs over the last couple of years, and thankfully they have offered to continue supporting the KWACS committee as Joint Vice-Chairs for the coming year. KWACS's success as a diverse and valued village society is down to our loyal membership and our dedicated committee, and my thanks goes to them all.

KWACS has hosted an excellent programme of talks over the seven months from October to April (thanks to the Chris's – Mason and Powles), with hybrid attendance in the church and on Zoom, which allows members to join us from afar. For an annual subscription of only £12, members have enjoyed a diverse range of subjects including:

- 'The Upper Ray', by BBOWT reserve officer Chloe Bradford;
- 'Molluscs' by Mark Carnell of the University of Oxford;
- 'The Magic and Mysteries of Mistletoe' by Oliver Stacey (also of the UofO);
- 'Brownfield Gardening' by Russell Hartwell (MD of 'A Place for Nature');
- 'Hardy Orchids' by Colin Clay of the Hardy Orchid Society; and
- 'Countryside Detective' by Stephen Powles (wildlife photographer).

Our January Member's meeting included analysis of the bat calls we had picked up on detectors during one of our Wildlife Wanders back in July (thanks to Filippo Faraone, a consultant ecologist at HDA), as well as the relaunch of Kirtlington Hedgehog Street by our own Estelle Bailey. As you will have seen in the Village News, we are encouraging villagers to send us records of their sightings of hedgehogs, so that we can update our maps of activity, enabling us to focus on those gardens where connectivity would be most useful. The monthly Wednesday Wildlife Wanders during the summer have also proved popular. We had a bird wander around the village on May 6th, which was preceded on the 3rd May with an early start for International Dawn Chorus Day.

Our conservation activities continue to focus on our two areas in the churchyard, the pond, the community orchard and scrub removal in the quarry, and we have plenty of spare scythes, rakes and chest waders for willing volunteers (who are sometimes rewarded with light refreshments and cake!) Looking outwardly, we continue to make regular measurements of the water quality of our local water bodies, in support of the Cherwell and Ray Catchment Partnership, and are supporting other churches in the Akeman Benefice to develop wildlife areas in their churchyards.

We are working on next year's programme of talks which we hope to reveal at the Village Fete on the 27th June, when we will also be encouraging more villagers to become 'spies' for the KGB (the Kirtlington Garden Birds survey, of course) by holding a bird identification quiz. See you there!