KIRTLINGTON WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION SOCIETY

JOINT CHAIRS' AND TREASURER'S REPORTS ON THE YEAR TO APRIL 2025 FOR THE KIRTLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2025

MEETINGS

Our Wednesday evening lectures have all been delivered in person by a fantastic variety and quality of speakers at St Mary's Church, with the exception of March where we adjourned to the Village Hall to accommodate the Ash Wednesday Service. We have continued to broadcast the talks via Zoom to enable KWACS members near and far to stay connected which has been great to see.

The programme has been as follows:

October	**The Cull of the Wild**	*Hugh Warwick, Ecologist and Author*
November	**Dragonflies – Masters of Air and Water**	*Brian Walker, British Dragonfly Society*
December	**Water Voles – A National Approach to Saving "Ratty"**	*Dr Merryl Gelling, WildCRU, Oxford University and Spires Ecology*
January	**KWACS members' evening – An Introduction to the Cherwell and Ray Water Watch Project, and 'Friend or Foe' Quiz**	*Ian Stone, KWACS Treasurer and KWACS members*
February	**Yellow Wagtails**	*Sophie Cunningham, Wild Oxfordshire*
March	**Polecats and Pine Martens – Paths to Recovery**	*Katherine Morley, Vincent Wildlife Trust*
April	**Wildlife, Warriors and Women**	*Professor Amy Dickman, Director WildCRU, University of Oxford*

Part way through the season we invested in a new projector to ensure our speakers and audience see the presentations in the high quality imagery and resolution they deserve – we hope you'll agree this was a worthy investment.

ACTIVITIES

The following has happened in the year.

Pond: KWACS has continued with its programme of ongoing maintenance, including four winter work parties this year to remove as much of the invasive New Zealand Pigmyweed and for the annual rotation of 'reed' removal. Ian Stone has continued with the water testing of the village pond, which, although a long term project, is beginning to yield interesting cyclic results. This year, four grass snakes have been counted and the presence of Great Crested Newts confirmed.

Water Watch: KWACS has continued to support the Water Watch scheme for the Cherwell & Ray Catchment Partnership, which began in October 2023. It is monitoring nutrient levels and turbidity across the whole catchment, and we are providing data for the Cherwell and Oxford Canal. This has also given us the opportunity to further build our understanding of the village pond by measuring nutrient levels there too. Ian presented the results thus far at the members meeting in January. The whole of the river catchment is polluted with nitrates, and phosphate levels are variable depending on levels of rain and outflows from sewage treatment. The Village Pond however has consistently very low nutrient levels.

Churchyard: the normal activities in the Churchyard have continued i.e. the scything in mid to late summer, insect and wildflower recording. In the autumn we reduced invasive plants from alongside the north wall and planted patches of Winter Aconite and Wood Anemones in that area, and a later work party cleared brambles from the southern wall beside the Fry's garden. In addition, Junior KWACS has forged a partnership with the Wednesday morning 'Rise and Shine' club to encourage young naturalists through creating bird boxes, insect houses and wildflower seed bombs.

The big disappointment for us was that unauthorised mowings of the wildlife areas were carried out in the summer and early autumn. We are working with the PCC to try to ensure this does not occur again.

Butterflies and Moths: we continue to encourage butterfly sightings to be submitted to Butterfly Conservation on iRecord. 2024 was a notably poor season for butterflies. For instance there were only a handful of records of Small Tortoiseshells and other more common species like Peacock and Red admiral were noticeably fewer as well.

Scything / Community Orchard: KWACS has continued to support the orchard with scything and to record its wildflowers. As well as the main season scything of the churchyard and the orchard, we are also cutting a number of smaller areas inside and outside the allotments, the pond banks, and supporting the seasonal mowing of wildflower areas in a number of residents' gardens. This year the whole orchard was scythed twice and some parts a third time to allow sewing of Yellow Rattle seed. As a result the team scythed close to 1.5 acres.

Hedgehog Street: hedgehogs were seen around the village last year and at the start of this season. The outreach work in the form of Stephen Powles giving a lecture on Kirtlington Hedgehog Street has continued to be very popular. Some maintenance of the hedgehog holes through fences and walls around the village has been done.

Quarry: KWACS have been monitoring the recent tree-felling to control Ash dieback with a view to looking for opportunities for habitat creation once the works are complete and the areas are open again.

KGB Survey: now in its 29th year, the KGB continues to provide data. A decreasing number of participants will become a concern and so new 'spies' would be very welcome.

Other Activities: Village Fete – KWACS hosted a very successful and engaging stand with a range of activities including Wildlife Transformers Game, Whose Poo and Wriggly Worms! **Amphibian Walk** - Angela Julian returned to Kirtlington on Saturday 13th April with a very bright torch for a dusk-time peek into our ponds to see what might be lurking and breeding in them. We were fortunate to see newts – common and great crested, frogs, toads and a wide range of invertebrates including dragonfly / damselfly larvae and diving beetles.

THANKS

As always, thanks are extended to (i) all members from the village and further afield for their regular support and attendance, (ii) our speakers for an excellent series of talks, (iii) all those involved with providing refreshments at meetings, and (iv) committee members for organising and publicising meetings, providing the Zoom facility and managing KWACS's work around the parish.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND TREASURER'S REPORT

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2024-2025

INCOME			EXPENDITURE		
	2023/24	2024/25		2023/24	2024/25
	£	£		£	£
B/F	5,319.78	5,548.19	Speakers	290.00	370.00
Subs & Visitors	704.00	917.00	Rent	70.00	78.75
Donations	642.00	47.00	Equip & Material	722.59	951.51
Hedgehog Fund	10.00	-	Subscriptions	-	35.00
Refreshments	-	124.70	Refreshments	45.00	112.00
	6,675.78	6,636.89		1,127.59	1,547.26

INCOME (inc. balance B/F)	6,636.89
EXPENDITURE	1,547.26
CARRIED FORWARD	5,089.63

TREASURER'S REPORT

The balance brought forward at the beginning of the year was £5,548.19. There was further in-year income of £1,088.70 made up of subs and "visitors" (£917.00), general donations (£47.00) and donations for wine and refreshments at monthly meetings (£124.70). Expenditure for the year was £1,547.26 including £370.00 for speaker fees/donations; £78.75 for renting the church and the village hall for the March meeting when the church was unavailable; £951.51 for equipment and practical work; £35.00 for annual subscription for membership of Wild Oxfordshire; and £112.00 for wine for pre-meeting refreshments. The significant expenditure on equipment and practical work included £265.00 for additional scything equipment; £194.99 for bulbs and Yellow Rattle seed for the churchyard; £471.52 for a new projector and carry case; and £20.00 for repair of pond work tools. The balance carried forward into 2025/26 is £5,089.63.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

KWACS implemented our proposed annual rolling Chair with Tim Donoyou and Shelley Rowley jointly taking the position for a year supported by Chris Powles as Vice Chair, Ian Stone as Treasurer and Helen Barnard, Sue Brown, Christine Marsh, Estelle Bailey and Stephanie Hilborne as very valued committee members.

The intention was that Chris Mason would chair KWACS for the year 2025-2026, followed by Christine Marsh for 2026-2027 and then Christopher Powles 2027-2028. However, Chris has very gently indicated that he would be more than grateful for Tim and Shelley to continue for another year with Chris P remaining as Vice Chair The rolling Chair model will restart in 2026-2027 with Christine Marsh.

The committee have accepted this and therefore propose to our members for endorsement at the AGM.

The Joint Chairs would like to take this opportunity to thank all the committee for their positive input and energy – a really great, proactive team.