

**European Conservation Action Network
EuCAN Community Interest Company**



Registered Company no. 7513162

Annual Report March 1st 2019 – February 29th 2020

Contact details: Nigel Spring (Director)
346, Mundens Lane,
Alweston,
Sherborne,
Dorset DT9 5HU
01963 23559
Email: nigelspring@yahoo.co.uk

Registration number: Registered Company no. 7513162

Bank details: Account name: EUCAN COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY
Bank name: Cooperative Sort code: 08.92.99

Account numbers: No. 1 account: 65472987; EuCAN CIC-DMV account: 65569890

EuCAN CIC Directors

Nigel Spring is a former teacher who established and was for sixteen years Director of The Kingcombe Centre, an environmental study centre in west Dorset, and The Kingcombe Trust, the charity which owned it until 2010. Since leaving The Kingcombe Centre in 2004, he has worked with Butterfly Conservation as site manager and volunteer coordinator for their Dorset reserves and on the education part of Butterfly Conservation's main website, and in 2007 established EuCAN through The Kingcombe Trust with three consecutive tranches of EU Leonardo da Vinci funding to take groups of volunteers and trainees to partner countries in Europe. He is now Chair of the Dorset branch of Butterfly Conservation .

Gwilym Wren retired from Natural England in 2014, having worked for many years in various roles using his skills and training as a Land Agent. His last post was as their Senior Planning Adviser in the south and southwest of England. He co-led the EuCAN conservation visit to western Poland in 2009 and organised the return visit by our Polish partner, ETNA, to Dorset in 2011. He is involved in several European sustainable agriculture and forestry initiatives and in March 2016 organised a Sustainable Forestry Conference through Forum Synergies based in Milverton, Somerset. He has since attended conferences in Serbia, Ukraine and Estonia. He has been working on his ideas for an agri-environment scheme for Wildlife Havens/'Pop-up Knepps' for several years.

Joe Middleton is a conservation land management specialist, naturalist and ecologist. UK based - currently working as Site Manager for The Woodland Trust managing woodlands across the South West of the UK. He studies and teaches wildlife ecology, specialising in butterflies and woodlands, and runs wildlife engagement activities at UK events and festivals. His voluntary roles include - Director for EUCAN, and Independent Advisor on the committee of the Bristol Nature Network. He joined EUCAN in 2010 on a trip to Hungary and has been involved with us ever since.

Directors Meetings

Directors' meetings were held on the following dates: 18.3.19, 29.4.19, AGM 1.6.19, 30.9.19, 25.11.19, 3.2.20

AGM and Residential weekend Langafor farm, Dartmoor 31.5 – 2.6.19. Our 2019 annual get-together was based at the Langafor Farm Centre near Moretonhampstead on the edge of Dartmoor, a beautiful site belonging to the Langafor Trust. We are very grateful to Megan Lowe and Rob Skinner for organising this weekend for us. We had good views of Marsh Fritillary and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterflies and Narrow-bordered Bee-Hawkmoths as well as some of the other early summer wildlife to be found on Dartmoor – including Pied flycatchers in Fingle Woods on the Saturday afternoon. Tim Harrod led a very informative workshop on soils and this was followed by an interesting presentation by Phil Bruss on Dragonflies and Damselflies; on the Saturday evening we had a slide show and extremely inspiring talk by John Walters on the Wildlife of Dartmoor.

The moth trapping was very productive, thanks particularly to Jack Oughton and Tim Norriss, with 116 species recorded. One of the species was *Ancylus geminana*, new for the Devon list.

The link to some of the photos taken is on the EuCAN website.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/20427639@N06/albums/72157709075816761>

With photos of some of the moths caught on

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/20427639@N06/albums/72157708925692061>

Annual Report

1. Introduction/background.
2. Dissemination activities.
3. EuCAN CIC Local groups
4. Links with European partners
5. Training.
6. Membership of EuCAN CIC
7. Fundraising and enterprises
8. Contracts
9. Education and survey work
10. Somerset group report.
11. DMV reports.
12. Milverton Group report.

Introduction/background.

- Although EuCAN began life in 2007 primarily as a project to link conservation volunteers in the UK with partner organisations in the countries of the EU, since 2011, when our EU grant money came to an end, we have concentrated our efforts on management contracts, survey weekends, projects and volunteer groups in the UK, mainly in Dorset and Somerset, though we have maintained our links with our European partners and several new initiatives have been set up since 2011.
- EuCAN Community Interest Company grew out of a Leonardo da Vinci (European Union Lifelong Learning Programme) funded project which began in 2007 through the west Dorset charity The Kingcombe Trust. The aim of this was to bring together peoples from different countries of the EU to work together on conservation projects – practical habitat management and biodiversity surveying – and to involve as many people as possible from the local communities.
- Between 2007 and 2011, over 300 volunteers visited 11 partner organisations on 23 different two-week placements, and an active network has grown with regular communication via email, an effective website and opportunities for people to join in reunion, dissemination and training weekends where we put their new skills to good use on local nature reserves.
- In 2010, The Kingcombe Trust was dissolved and all its assets transferred to The Dorset Wildlife Trust, so in February 2011 we established EuCAN as an independent Community Interest (not-for-

profit) Company (CIC) to enable us to be involved in community conservation projects in the UK as well as abroad, and to work on our training and sustainable agriculture activities more effectively. We aim to set up conservation projects as financially viable enterprises and feel that the CIC model best enables us to do this. During the past year, our ninth as a CIC, we have run several projects based in Dorset and Somerset and have undertaken an increasing number of conservation contracts. We now have three local groups linked to the main company.

- The original project through The Kingcombe Trust had a sum of money allocated for dissemination, training and reunions which was transferred to the Dorset Wildlife Trust in 2010; the company has organised the activities funded by this budget since then, as well as carrying out its own fundraising activities. The last remaining funds were spent during 2013.

Dissemination activities.

- We continue to maintain the EuCAN website which enables our network of members, trainees and former participants to keep in touch with our activities – www.eucan.org.uk. The overall management of the website has been carried out by Graham Bennett, but the content management system now in place has enabled us to manage the website independently.
- We continue to use the database of former participants to enable us to maintain contact with them with their news being transferred to the website and promotion of job opportunities, training courses, our holidays, conservation placements and reunions being achieved through emailing and advertising on the website.
- We continue to recruit new contacts through our website and other links and to disseminate information about opportunities with us and other environmental organisations.
- Social media: as well as email and the EuCAN website, we are now using Facebook and Twitter more effectively, with Gwil Wren and Joe Middleton sending notices round through Facebook.

EuCAN CIC Local Groups

- EuCAN DMV (Dorset Midweek Volunteers) joined EuCAN in July 2012, the former BTCV Dorset group having been wound up. The EuCAN.dmv group has worked every Wednesday and often on other weekdays too, and now regularly attracts over 20 participants on each task. The group is run by volunteers who report back to the EuCAN Directors and manage their own bank account. The group generally charges clients £250 per day for their services (increased this year) and makes a quarterly payment of 10% of the income into the CIC main account to cover administration cost, accountancy and liability insurance. Three quarterly reports from the DMV are attached below.
- Minibus: in March 2013 EuCAN DMV took delivery of a 2007 plate minibus purchased from Dorset Vehicle Rentals with a £10,000 grant from NE. It has been used every week at least once for the Midweek Volunteers tasks and also for the Cerne Valley Community Landscape Project on Thursdays and on other occasions when a minibus is an advantage. It has proved to be an invaluable asset. Each user of the vehicle put £70 into a dedicated account per day's use which is saved for maintenance costs of the vehicle and for the purchase of a newer minibus. In October 2017, the Midweek Volunteer group purchased a 2014 plate Transit minibus. The older vehicle was passed on to the EuCAN Somerset volunteers to enable them to attract more participants for whom transport is a problem. This older vehicle has become expensive to maintain and has not been used very often over the year so we need to consider whether its use justifies the costs of tax and insurance. In the period leading up to the Covid 19 lockdown however, it had begun to be used more frequently.
- Milverton Conservation Volunteer group was formed in 2013 by Gwilym Wren and Trevor Phelps as a local EuCAN CIC group, with a start-up grant of £850 from Somerset County Council Health and Wellbeing Fund to buy tools. The group has run a programme of one day a month practical conservation works since their inception with a regular series of tasks at Clatworthy Reservoir for Wessex Water. They have also run nestbox building workshops and other community events in Milverton.
- EuCAN Somerset Volunteers: in February 2014 the former Somerset TCV group based in Yeovil was wound up and, as had happened with the Dorset BTCV group in similar circumstances, the volunteers

opted to join EuCAN as a local group. Unlike the Dorset Midweek Volunteers, there has been no one person available to run this group. In the last six years or so, the volunteers have been involved in regular tasks on Tuesdays most weeks. The group has had a number of referrals of new volunteers from various agencies, who have a range of issues which require them to be given particular attention. It is becoming clear that the group needs to have a volunteer or part-time employee who will undertake the supervision and care of these volunteers.
See report below.

Links with European partners

- Serbia: There was no trip to Serbia in 2019 planned as a follow-up to the Serbia Forestry Workshop with Forum Synergies tour in 2018, (mainly due to political changes in the country) and contact with the local organisers to arrange alternatives in Portugal or Spain has been difficult.
- Transylvania haycamp. There was no organised event this year due to family difficulties for Attila in Gyimes.
- Croatia - Trevor Phelps once again provided an organizational framework for UK visitors to attend the BIOM Bird Ringing Camp in the Uzca National Park in August 2019.

Training

- Malcolm Halfacre, our minibus driver for the Somerset volunteers, attended a safeguarding course in Weymouth.
- Chardwatch presentation for people with mental health issues. Several members of our EuCAN volunteers attended a day at Monk's Yard Ilminster.
- Brushcutter training – we held a brushcutter training course in April 2019 for four members of the EuCAN Somerset group, with the second day of the course in January 2020. As before, the trainer was Guy Measures of Newlands Training.
- First Aid Training: we held another day course aimed at conservation volunteers in Puddletown Church Hall in April 2019, attended by 4 members of the Somerset volunteers, 2 members of the Cerne Valley team and with four volunteers from Butterfly Conservation Dorset branch. The training was once again given by Paul Bilke.

Membership of EuCAN CIC

Membership now stands at 152. Participants in our residential activities in the UK and abroad (other than the volunteer tasks) are now asked to become members. A membership form can be downloaded from the EuCAN CIC website. The membership fee is still a one-off fee of £10 (£5 for unwaged).

Fundraising and enterprises

- Cerne Valley Community Landscape Project (funded up to 2018 by the Patsy Wood Trust): we were pleased to receive £4993 from The Nineveh Charitable Trust in 2018 and received £4600 as the local good cause at the local Co-op stores during the year October 18 to October 2019. These sums combined with the payments made by the landowners for our work in the Cerne area should cover most of our costs up until the end of the 2019/2020 work season. We attended a day at the Dorchester Co-op store in November to receive our cheque and to display information about our activities. This has been the eighth year of the Cerne Valley project and between March 2019 and the end of March 2020, we have worked on 7 different local sites on 17 Thursdays, a total of 240 mandays, more than last year but still reduced due to the appalling winter weather – on wet days we tend not to take out our Weymouth group. We also held a very enjoyable Christmas lunch party and skittles match for 27 of our volunteers at the Acorn Inn in Evershot.
All the feedback we have had from the landowners about our work has been very positive and it was gratifying to be asked by the Cerne Abbas Village Hall committee to work on their water meadows and adjacent hedges. As in previous years, some of the work was carried out under contract from Butterfly Conservation for their Duke of Burgundy project on Giant Hill above Cerne Abbas and

some for the Minterne Estate. Jane Tearle, a local photographer, has visited the group again this year to take some lovely studies of the participants – all of which are on show on our Flickr site and the Cerne Abbas village site too.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/20427639@N06/albums/72157712817516811>

One of the highlights of 2019 for our Cerne Valley volunteers was the re-chalking of the Cerne Giant for the National Trust in August when we were joined by the BBC Countryfile film crew and presenters (though our appearance on the show was rather fleeting!) The photographs from our two sessions can be seen on this link:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/20427639@N06/albums/72157710638291252>

We held two successful guided walks on Giant Hill in Cerne Abbas on May 4th 2019 as part of the Cerne Giant Festival. 16 of our volunteers took part in May in a walk and BBQ at our local butterfly reserve at Alners Gorse.

In February 2020 we took the Cerne Valley group to Portland to help with the scrub cutting on Broadcroft Quarry reserve: it was good to have a complete change of scene.

- Community Juicing Project: the juicing season in 2019 was another excellent one though not quite a record-breaker; we managed to produce 3384 75cl bottles for sale back to the owners of the orchards and for retail in local shops, with increasing numbers of customers each year. We were very pleased to be able to collect excellent apples from a friend with a neglected orchard in Chilthorne Domer outside Yeovil and also large numbers of delicious Ashmeads Kernel apples from our friend Heather Brown in Hazelbury Plucknett. All these apples were converted into juice for us to sell directly to local retail outlets.
- Log sales: the Ash, Beech and Lawson's Cypress logs thinned out of the woodland at Nether Cerne by our contractors and volunteers have been split and stored under cover in a rented barn and have been sold during the autumn and winter of 2018/19. The volume has been estimated at 200 cubic metres +, of which approaching half was sold last financial year while the other unsplit logs in the wood were collected, split and stored during the summer of 2019 and were mostly sold during winter 2019/20. Oak logs from our contract on Alners Gorse Butterfly reserve were stacked up at Pollbridge Stables during the summer of 2018 and have been sawn up and split this FY for sale in the 19/20 winter. The remainder will be split and stored during the 20/21 winter.

Contracts

- Sherborne Terrace Meadows SNCI work. We have continued to be involved with local volunteers and EuCAN trainees and contractors to improve the limestone grassland habitat on the edge of Sherborne and the management of the Local Nature Reserve at The Quarr in Sherborne. For both sites we are responsible to and funded by Sherborne Town Council. We held an open event on the two sites on Sunday July 14th when 12 people attended. The maintenance work includes cutting and removing hay on the two sites (particularly targeting the areas with the most hogweed) and sowing Yellow Rattle seed to enable the wildflowers to flourish; cutting blackthorn and other scrub regrowth on the Terraces site, cutting out all the hemlock and removing ragwort where necessary. One of our powertools users lives close to the Quarr and carries out management work with our brushcutter there. We have been very impressed with the improvement in the floweriness of the Terrace Meadow. This summer we cut and baled the hay using a local farmer and his ancient machine and sold the hay off the field to cover our costs. This produced some very good hay for the ponies for the winter. We have continued to look after the grassy area adjacent to Terrace Meadows SNCI known as Jubilee Copse which was planted up with trees in the winter of 2017/18, and have continued to introduce plug plants grown from locally collected wildflower seed to increase the floristic diversity of this area and have sown more yellow rattle seed taken from the upper part of the Terrace Meadows where the rattle is spreading well. We have discovered that the local rabbits dig up the plug plants unless they are fenced out and will also eat Yellow rattle!
- Osmington HLS contract. The atrociously wet winter weather prevented us from making our annual visit to carry out our gorse cutting on the White Horse Hill.

- Lyons Gate: We have carried out routine scrubcutting as in previous years and refenced a stretch of the boundary where a car had been through.
- East Lydford: we have continued to help with the maintenance of the private site near East Lydford, a possible habitat for the Shril Carder Bee. This site has now sadly changed hands.
- Dorset Butterfly Reserves: we have once again been contracted to carry out maintenance work on the four reserves managed by the Dorset branch of Butterfly Conservation, including clearing scrub regrowth, ragwort control, clematis and bramble cutting on Portland and the removal of oak trees and conifers on Alners Gorse Reserve. This work normally involves our sub-contractors and volunteers working alongside Butterfly Conservation volunteers. The Dorset Midweek Volunteers joined forces with other EuCAN volunteers and some members of the Dorset branch of Butterfly Conservation to carry out a mammoth brushcutting session on the Broadcroft Quarry Butterfly Reserve. We took our volunteers and some of the Dorset Midweek group on a butterfly walk on Portland in late June as a reward for their hard work.
- Hazelbury Bryan 'Keep' Field. We have continued to carry out improvement works on the 'Keep' field in Hazelbury Bryan, the community field belonging to the Parish Council. In summer 2019 we cut and baled the hay and sold it from the field to cover the cost of the baler. The addition of more plug plants to improve the floral diversity continues as does the sowing of more locally sourced yellow rattle seed.
- Charminster Community Field, near Dorchester. The area we planted with locally sourced wildflower plugs last season has flourished and we have added more this summer. We have also cut and removed much of the rank grass growth in the southern end of the field.
- Our volunteers helped our friends at the organic farm at Godmanstone with their 'wild oating' in July.
- Wallis Farm Cattistock. We have been contracted to do a major scrub clearance job on the slopes above Wallis farm between Maiden Newton and Cattistock as part of the farm's stewardship scheme with NE. We did a preliminary butterfly survey with a small group of people in the summer of 2019 and then did four days there in February 2020 doing 15 mandays paid and 9.3 volunteer days in addition.
- We carried out scrub cutting contracts for the AONB on two sites between Dorchester and Bridport, at Chilcombe and Nallers farm.

Education and survey work

- We took a stall and gave a presentation to the Blandford Sustainability Fair in August 2019.
- We were involved in two very well-attended butterfly walks in early May as part of the Cerne Abbas Giant festival programme.
- Chedington Woods. Over the weekend of 28-30th June, we held a very successful second residential weekend at Wyke Farm and the surrounding Chedington Woods in west Dorset, as guests of Rob and Alex Appleby, with about 20 people staying in the barn and in tents and campervans on an adjacent field, eating extremely well and carrying out a series of surveys of various taxa.
- Chettle House. We took part in a Bioblitz at Chettle House a few miles east of Blandford on the weekend of July 6th/7th, setting up a number of very productive moth traps.
- We helped Natural England with their annual Green-winged Orchid count in early May on the National Nature Reserve at Barrington Hill just north of Ilminster.
- We led two public birdsong walks in Netherclay woods on the western edge of Taunton, with the organisers laying on a delicious breakfast nearby. 29 species of birds were recorded in total.

Nigel Spring

EuCAN groups

EuCAN Somerset Volunteers

This EuCAN volunteer group generally meets every Tuesday. In the year March 2019 to February 2020, a total of 501 mandays have been worked on 44 sessions – 54 mandays increase over the previous year - on 20 different sites. That is an average of around 11 volunteers per session. We have a very dedicated core of volunteers who get a great deal of satisfaction from the work and the social aspects of the group. The 2019 Christmas lunch and skittles game at the Acorn pub at Evershot (joint with the Cerne Valley group) was a great success, hugely enjoyed by the 27 volunteers who attended.

Our clients vary from NGO's like the Somerset Wildlife Trust (we do fencing and sedge cutting on West Coker fen and woodland work at Great Breach Wood), Butterfly Conservation, The National Trust and Natural England to individual landowners such as Freda Hennessy at Corscombe and the Green Burial Ground nearby, Pauline Pires at Lyons Gate and Zanna and Andrew at Rugbourne Farm near Bath; and organisations like Sherborne Town Council, The Magdalen Farm Centre, near Winsham, Hazelbury Bryan Parish Council, The Otterhead Lakes Trust, South Chard Gravel Pits (Aggregate Industries), Young Wood Activities Centre near Staple Fitzpaine and Charminster Community Field. We also spent a day clearing the first section of an overgrown medieval drove near Sherborne, the second such drove we have opened up in the area.

We generally charge £200 for a volunteer day approx. 9am until 4pm. The group rate applies to groups of at least 6 volunteers with one or two powertool users with £130 added per extra powertool user. Occasionally for some of the clients we waive the fee.

We have tried throughout the year to attract new volunteers particularly through the mental health agencies. Recruitment remains a major challenge. This year we have been recruiting clients through the company Discovery who have taken over the day centres in Somerset. Several of the clients have attended the Somerset volunteer days with their key workers and we are attempting to regularise this relationship. We have also had referrals though the Inspire2Achieve group (I2A) run by the Yarlinton Housing organisation in Yeovil and have acquired two extremely good volunteers this way. We have given a presentation to the older pupils in Fairmead School, a Special school in Yeovil, hoping to encourage them to join our volunteer groups – so far without success! We have been in discussion with Bournemouth NHS Trust Mental Health Trust with a view to involving some of their clients in our work. So far they have visited Ryewater Nursery but have not joined us.

We had a referral from the Probation Service for a young man who was on the Register of Sex Offenders (for illegal use of his computer). Several meetings took place in Yeovil and he attended two workparties with his supervisor but very soon decided our work was not for him.

In 2019, we were asked to involve staff and pupils from the Avalon School, a special school in Street, in conservation activities in Combe Hill Wood (owned by the Ninesquare Trust) and next door Great Breach Wood (Somerset Wildlife Trust). We set up several day sessions where the pupils and staff worked with our volunteers but the arrangements were not very satisfactory and the pupils were not really allowed to work with our volunteers, so the manager of Combe Hill Wood took over this challenge.

We have also been part of the Natural Choices group managed by the Local Nature Partnership through the Dorset Wildlife Trust which aims to coordinate health giving activities in Dorset. We have both the Cerne Valley events and the Dorset Midweek Volunteers registered on the Natural Choices spreadsheet of activities though no new volunteers have been found through this channel. We have made contact with the ChardWatch Project, a charity working with people with learning disabilities in Chard, and have found new volunteers through them.

Minibus: the EuCAN Somerset Volunteers use the Ford Transit Minibus which was passed down by the Dorset Mid-week Volunteers when they acquired a newer model. It is costly to maintain and is not regularly

used so we have been in discussions with the Sherborne Scout Group with a view to possibly sharing their bus. In the end and with the arrival of Covid19, it seemed easier to continue to use ours as it allows us more flexibility.

Nigel Spring

EUCAN.DMV

EuCAN.DMV Annual Report 1/3/19 to 29/2/20

1. Overview:

1. **EuCAN DMV** continues to thrive via a combination of growth, consolidation, a social ethos of inclusivity and, above all, by attempting to provide our volunteers with a variety of tasks and opportunities to learn, develop, and share skills.
Everybody in the group, including the organisers (who remain in the background as much as possible), is an unpaid volunteer.
Regular volunteers organised a regular cake rota which is greatly appreciated by all, and which reinforces everybody's sense of being included and adds to the camaraderie.
2. Our **main clients** are Natural England and the Dorset AONB. The work for the latter is currently funded by the National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
The overall objective of the scheme is to reduce the landscape and visual impact of National Grid's existing electricity infrastructure and enhance the quality of the affected designated landscapes. Where the visual impacts of the electricity transmission line cannot be directly screened or otherwise mitigated it may be possible to shift emphasis away from the transmission line by enhancing the landscape in other ways. In our case, that means hedge-laying, drystone walling, and some scrub removal.
3. One of our objectives is to NOT deprive others of paid work, so we aim to do work that would not otherwise be done. However, budgets cuts mean that NE rely increasingly upon volunteers, and AONB funding bids make provision for community involvement.
4. We have invested in **Tools and Training** and have received very useful financial and material assistance to that end.
5. As a group, **we work Wednesdays only**, though a small team is formed to work an additional day if a client requires it.
6. It has occasionally been suggested that we should take on a regular additional day, but the downsides to that are:
 - Almost all of our volunteers are retired, have other activities during the week, so set one day aside for the work we do

- It would reduce the size of the group on the day, because not all would be available for more than one day,
- People would ‘cherry pick’ and attend the more interesting task, leaving the less popular task under-staffed
- It would impact negatively upon the social aspect / cohesion, which is a very important element of our group.

2. Our Volunteers

1. Our volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and bring a range of interests and abilities but no ‘attitudes’ - a microcosm of the better part of society,
2. For the period 1/3/19 to 29/2/20, 45 volunteers have worked in our team. Some come only once. Others have become regular or occasional attendees.
3. During that period we worked on 59 days, totalling 965 volunteer days – an average turnout of 16.3 volunteers..

The maximum turnout on any one day was 25.

3. Volunteer Skills

With the assistance of funding from the South Dorset Ridgeway Project, we now have:-

9 x Chainsaw Operators
 13 x Brushcutter operators
 14 x First-aiders.

4. Power Tool Maintenance

- There are more chainsaw operators than machines, so machines are passed between operators. The key stipulation is that the operator cleans and sharpens machines after use, ready for the next workday or operator.
- Our volunteers include a retired engineer who deals with any machine issues, Where the issues are beyond his abilities (modern tools require electronic diagnostics), the machines are taken to the manufacturer’s agents.
- All operators are made aware of any issue in any machine and the cause of the issue.

5. Health and Safety

No incidents

6. Minibus Service and MOT

Completed. No issues

7. Accounts.

1. We charge our clients £250 per workday, inclusive of power tools (6 brushcutters and 5 chainsaws)
2. 10% of our gross income goes to EuCAN CIC.
3. Our net income primarily covers the cost of tools and training, the rental of a storage space for our equipment (the unit included a workshop area), running our minibus, and investment into a minibus-replacement fund.
4. As of 29/2/20:
 - DMV main account held £14,088.10,
 - DMV vehicle account £9,882.56
5. There will be a significant outlay from 2021 onwards when a number of machine-operator and first-aid tickets will need to be renewed.
Additionally, a buffer is maintained for unexpected expenditure and/or reduced income.

Dave Searle, EuCAN DMV

EuCAN Milverton Conservation Volunteers Annual Report 2019/20

Local Work

Clatworthy Reservoir

The Group continued its successful association with Wessex Water at Clatworthy Reservoir.

Between March and May, we supplied an extra 16 nest boxes to take the total to 60 and fixed them all with nest box hole protectors. We also helped monitor and ring the Pied Flycatcher population. Of 44 occupied boxes 11 had flycatchers. 72 chicks and 12 adults were ringed. Additionally, one of the fledglings ringed in 2018 was found near Ludlow in June. The work was done by Trevor Phelps, assisted by Nick Thomas.

In June, 6 volunteers undertook the annual bashing of bracken in the 'broomrape area'. Although the day was curtailed by rain we attended again and finished the job. The two plants observed in 2018 were still present and the work is a great success.

In July the second Open Day was held, and Trevor and Nick Thomas attended with a nest box stall. Children were given the opportunity (under supervision) to build nestboxes and bug boxes. A total of 24 nest boxes and 42 bugboxes were built.

In September, over 2 days, the Group placed guards around 150 naturally regenerating seedlings of birch, oak, holly, hazel and rowan in areas cleared by the wardens.

Trevor organised a guided walk around the reservoir after Christmas followed by a pub meal. Fifteen people attended and this is likely to become an annual event.

Swifts

Following concerns about the loss of nest sites we welcomed the Taunton Swift Group to a walk around the village in early June. We found three distinct groupings of nests and several potential sites including the church. After a notice in the Parish Magazine six householders offered to host a nest box. We have researched designs and Trevor is building nestboxes for the 2020 season. The Church is a Listed Building and will require a 'faculty' before a multi hole box can be installed.

Holme Moor

We have been cutting the saw-sedge on rotation virtually every year since 2014. Unfortunately the winter has been so wet that we have had to cancel planned cutting on three occasions. We are now concerned that its is too late this winter and will consult with NE and the landowner about two cuts next winter.

Road verges

- I. Roundabout: This was trimmed in March and December and continues to provide a constantly changing vegetation over the summer months. In particular Vipers Bugloss and Pyramidal Orchid had good years in 2019.
- II. School: We have had difficulties here over the amount we thought appropriate to cut against the complaints of drivers over visibility. We had intended to give the remaining long grass a trim over the winter but the chosen dates have coincided with very heavy rain. We will do a brief cut over before the end of March.
- III. Herb Farm: Following our successful cuts in 2018 and 2019 the Farm Manager is happy for us to continue. Some of the tightly packed plantation trees have been removed by contractors which gives us more room to work. Unfortunately, as with other sites, the weather has intervened on the dates we planned to work but we will do a brief cut over before the end of March.

Nest Box Saturday

The Group held its pre-Christmas Nest Box Saturday event at a new venue JW Blooms in Hill Common. It was very successful and 20 participants built 20 nest boxes and 20 bugboxes.

AGM

In January the Group held its AGM and Kick Off meeting. As well as discussing our work for the year ahead we showed slides of Trevor's trip to Georgia and a film about wildlife in the Baltic States. 13 people attended including several new potential group members.

External Work

Forestry Workshop

Gwil has continued as coordinator of the Sustainable Forestry Workshops in co-operation with Forum Synergies.

- I. The Report on Estonian Workshop was completed in March.
- II. Searching for a Mediterranean based partner for the final workshop Gwil visited Fondacion Mediterraneo near Seville. The Fondacion is based in the dehesa Cork Forest and offers an excellent venue with interesting topics for discussion. Unfortunately, the political situation in Spain is unsettled and so there has been no opportunity for local funding. As a result the meeting has been called off and we are looking for other partners.
- III. The search for partners has been ongoing since January and Gwil visited a Sustainable Forestry workshop in Florence in January with Simone Matouche from Forum Synergies. A potential contact in Valladolid was found and discussions are continuing.
- IV. Gwil attended the ROSEWOOD workshop in Florence in January. As well as finding a potential forestry contact (see above) he also came across a sustainable Food Forest enterprise in Holland and a sustainable land management project in Ireland. Both of these are worthy of future contact and potential EuCAN visits.

Albania

Gwil accompanied Jonathan Bradley on a successful recce trip to check the potential for a EuCAN trip in 2020. Unfortunately although there was some interest the coronavirus outbreak has introduced a high level of uncertainty and the trip has been postponed until 2021.

Croatia Bird Ringing Camp

Trevor attended this camp for the seventh year with Nick Thomas who drove down. The project is now well established and has incorporated meadow restoration which Trevor has led on. A new building was constructed for the 2019 season and the road access has been improved. Trevor has been invited to address a workshop on the meadow restoration project in September 2020.

Georgia

Trevor and Nick Thomas went on a wildlife trip to see the raptor migration.

Wildlife Havens

Following contact from a former NE colleague Gwil was asked to write an article about Havens for Conservation Land Management. This was published in the Spring edition, and although there has been some interest it has not been sustained. The new post EU agricultural regime offers an opportunity for this concept and Gwil is continuing to push it.

As a result he has been in contact with Prof Mark Everard of the University of West of England who is very interested in eco-system renewal. At Marks invitation Gwil attended a Restoring Ecosystem Workshop in Bristol in February. Conducted under Chatham House Rules it is intended to develop actions that can be taken forward.

External Links

Trevor and Gwil continue to collaborate with 'Alive in Milverton' who are actively seeking suitable planting land with the Wiveliscombe Tree Group.

Gwil attended a local authority meeting with NE to discuss District level licensing for Great Crested Newts. This is likely to lead to opportunities for pond creation and management which could involve groups like EuCAN in construction and long-term monitoring.

Gwil has been working with a small group helping to develop a land management scheme for the Quantocks. This has evolved into Trials and Testing project which will investigate various options and proposals for a more local type of scheme. The work is on-going.

GDW 4th March 2020