

Watch Group visit to look at spiders at St Michael's Church Brent Knoll – October 2022

Background to visit

WATCH provides nature conservation activities for children. In 2022 the local Somerset Wildlife Trust set up a WATCH Group based at Apex Park between Highbridge and Burnham-on-Sea. Their meeting in October 2022 was on spiders and was based at St Michael's churchyard.

Looking at spiders in the churchyard

Francis Farr-Cox provided the expert input for this meeting. He started by explaining some of the anatomical differences between male and female spiders, and their need for moisture, which explained why spiders keep out of the sun and aren't easy to spot during the day. We learned that garden and house spiders look very similar but behave completely differently when it comes to spinning their webs. Garden spiders spin a new web every night but house spiders make just one web that lasts a long time.



The opening talk by Francis Farr-Cox



A garden spider is coaxed out

His electric toothbrush was demonstrated on a garden spider's web, and, hey presto, one appeared in the centre of the web. Our children experimented with his toothbrush and one coaxed the noble false widow out of its lair in a crack in the wall. A demonstration of the vacuum leaf extractor revealed money and sac spiders, a wolf spider and a nursery web spider.



The noble false widow spider



Inspecting the contents of the vacuum sweeper

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Francis explained that the money spider was unusual because it operates underneath its web when it catches prey. Finally, a woodlouse spider was unearthed beneath a flat piece of stone where it was resting in its dense web before the night hunt.



The amazing red woodlouse spider

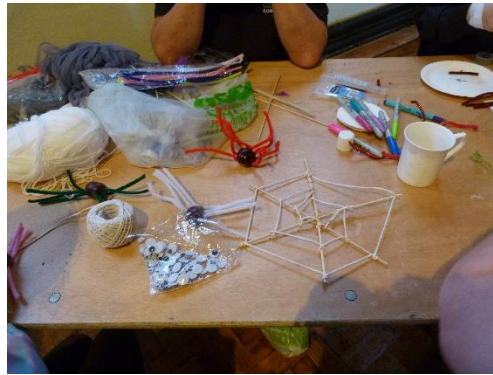


and its tightly spun web

Following our expertly guided spider hunt Margaret Micklewright, the local WATCH organiser took the children into the church and they sat down to make spiders and spider's webs, an excellent end to a memorable afternoon.



WATCH children at work in the church



some of their products