

Wild

SUSSEX



Sussex
Wildlife Trust

ISSUE 199
AUTUMN/WINTER
2026

A detailed close-up photograph of a hairy caterpillar, likely a moth larva, with large, translucent, feathery wings spread out. It is resting on a rough, light-colored rock surface. The caterpillar has a fuzzy, brownish body and large, dark, bead-like eyes.

**The science
behind what
we do**



Our vision is a Sussex rich in wildlife, valued and protected by everyone.

Sussex Wildlife Trust believe everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife in their daily lives. Nature is for everyone and nature needs everyone to be involved in its recovery.

Wild Sussex magazine is published twice a year, in April and October.

If you would prefer to receive this magazine digitally, please let us know.

Sign up to
our monthly
e-newsletter.



Membership

We love to hear from our members. Contact the team:
swtmembership@sussexwt.org.uk
01273 497532



Jamie Warren
Membership and
Database Manager



Helen Graham
Membership Officer

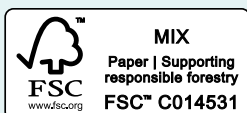


Heather Salisbury
Membership Officer



Cover

Gipsy Moth by Bob Foreman.
Read more on pages 18-19



L&S Printing are FSC
(Forest Stewardship
Council) accredited and
Carbon Neutral compliant

Regional Groups

Contact details for regional groups which hold local events for members and non-members:

Eastbourne

sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/eastbourne
secretary.swteastbourne@gmail.com

Storrington & Arun Valley

sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/sav
swtstorringtonregion@gmail.com

Sussex Wildlife Trust is a company limited by guarantee. Registered Company Number 006698851. Registered Charity Number 207005.

Wild Sussex is produced and published by: **Sussex Wildlife Trust, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, BN1 9BP.**

Chief Executive: Nic Scothern

Editorial Team: Emma Chaplin (editor), Richard Cobden, Charlie Peverett, Pat Bonham, Maggie O'Neill, Kerry Williams

Design: Ryan O'Hara – RhinoBytes.co.uk

01273 492630

enquiries@sussexwt.org.uk

sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter issue of Wild Sussex magazine

In a time of AI slop and fake facts – it's more important than ever that the actions we take are backed by real evidence. We're in a fight for nature and a fight for truth.

So the theme of this issue is 'the science behind what we do', explaining how the work we do, and the decisions we make, are evidence-led.

We're also launching our Marine Appeal to protect our wondrous seas.

Other highlights – broadcaster Kate Bradbury has written about being patient with your pond, our Reserves focus is the stunning Lewes Downs, find out about the magic of moths and discover why Wrens stop fighting and snuggle. Plus, CEO Nic Scothern tells us why inclusivity is vital in our fight to protect nature in Sussex.



In the 'science behind what we do' issue:

- 4 Bringing our Wild Sussex to life**
Update from Director of Conservation, Henri Brocklebank
- 5 Nature needs everyone**
A message from CEO Nic Scothern
- 6 Standing up for wildlife**
New in nature recovery
- 8 Conservation without evidence is just vibes**
Lou Mamalis, Monitoring and Evidence Manager
- 10 Reserves focus – The Lewes Downs**
Mark Monk-Terry explains big scrub management plans
- 13 An Atlas of the Seaweeds of Sussex**
What has seaweed ever done for us? Q&A with Ian Tittley
- 14 Pondering ponds**
By guest author, broadcaster Kate Bradbury

- 16 Life of brine**
Charlie Peverett explores Sussex by the sea. Plus we launch our Marine Appeal
- 18 Lovely Lepidoptera!**
Bob Foreman on moths
- 20 Whatever makes you mappy**
Millie Brand on GIS and beyond
- 22 Generation nature**
Anna Odedun and Katie Bell on our new Youth Forum
- 24 All creatures great and small**
A year of BioBlitzes
- 26 Staying alive beyond 1.5**
Louisa Jones on our Wilder projects
- 27 Collaborative hedge-laying**
Tamara Jewell of the Gatwick Greenspace Partnership
- 28 Legacies**
Gifts in wills – leaving a legacy for wildlife

- 29 Neurodivergence and nature**
Kai Hilton on how wildlife calms a busy brain
- 30 Investing in nature**
Spotlight on business members and partners
- 32 Sussex Kelp Recovery Project**
Taking a dive
- 33 Rye Harbour Nature Reserve**
Cy Baker, Makers Market and more
- 34 Other news**
Book reviews, Beavers, ghost ponds, Nofence collars, and David Harvey
- 36 A bundle of winter Wrens**
Time to snuggle



Bringing Our Wild Sussex to life



Henri Brocklebank
Director of
Conservation
(she/her)

In 2024, we published our strategy, *Our Wild Sussex*. Now we're setting out some practical steps to turn those ambitions into reality.

Managing land and nature reserves is a privilege and a responsibility. It's also complex. The condition of our sites is often influenced by factors beyond our control, while other challenges can be addressed only through significant investment, careful planning and regulatory processes.

Wild Sussex launches seven ambitious nature initiatives. Together, they address long-standing challenges, respond to a changing climate and set a clear course for nature recovery in Sussex, while creating opportunities for people to get involved.

Adapting to a changing climate – Arun Valley

At **Amberley Wild Brooks**, despite our efforts to manage the site's rich plant and invertebrate communities, we have seen the gradual drying of the peat soils at its heart. The first step of our ambition for this site is to rewet the peat while maintaining the wildlife features that make the site so important.

Catching up – The Lewes Downs (Malling Down and Southerham Farm)

The pandemic left its mark on practical conservation work. We're undertaking a major programme of habitat restoration, creating the conditions for grazing animals to play a greater role in shaping this iconic landscape (more on page 10).

Doing it differently – Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

With key fencing infrastructure due for replacement, we've had a unique opportunity to rethink how the reserve is managed. We plan to more than double the area protected for nesting birds, while improvements to water level management will create more and better habitat and bring wildlife closer to visitors.

Photos L to R: Amberley Wild Brooks

© Caroline Pearce

The Lewes Downs

© Neil Fletcher

Rye Harbour

Nature Reserve

© Stuart Conway

Sussex Downs

behind Worthing

© Ivor Chuter

Pevensey Marshes

© Kai Hilton

Ebernoe Wildlands

© Mark Monk Terry

Corkwing Wrasse

Worthing Beach

© Paul Parsons





A new nature reserve

Our plans include creating a new downland nature reserve north of Worthing, connected to existing wildlife-rich habitats. Working alongside neighbouring landowners and communities, we aim to link up a landscape where birds, wildflowers and butterflies can thrive.

We've started, so we'll finish – Pevensey Marshes

We're delighted with the first phase of habitat improvements at **Pevensey Marshes**. Despite a hot summer, the restored areas retained water, providing a vital refuge for wildlife. But this is only the beginning. There is much more to do.

Connecting people and nature – Ebernoe Wildlands

It is time to bring Ebernoe's woodland, former arable land and plantation woodland, together as one site: **Ebernoe Wildlands**. This tells the story of Sussex woodland, from acorn to mighty Oak, while enabling more people to experience its beauty without compromising its tranquillity and ecological value.

Our Wild Seas

Sussex Wildlife Trust already delivers an extensive marine programme, but a key focus for the future is strengthening Sussex's marine evidence base. Nature may not have a voice in the boardrooms where decisions are made, but evidence does. We'll invest in the systems, partnerships and culture needed to create a powerful shared resource for marine data, ensuring the voice of our seas is heard loud and clear.

These seven areas of work are a major focus for Sussex Wildlife Trust teams between now and 2030, while still delivering our 'business as usual' work. None of this is easy, but all of it is needed.

Wild Sussex Appeal
swtsupporters@
sussexwt.org.uk
01273 497524



Nature needs everyone

My biggest motivator is seeing the impact that people and communities can make for wildlife.

I started my career creating new nature reserves and visitor centres – seeing people connect to nature and be inspired to save it was so powerful for me. I then led multiple habitat restoration programmes where communities, landowners, farmers and organisations all came together to make a huge difference for wildlife in their local areas. People power works, and now more than ever we need people to come together to save nature. Nature is important for everyone, so we need everyone helping to save it.



Nic Scothern
(she/her)
CEO

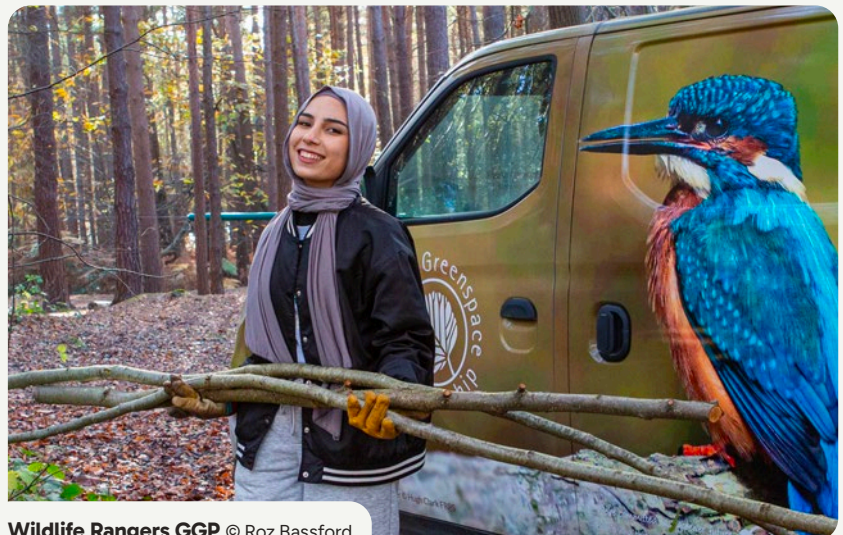
That is why inclusion is so important to me and Sussex Wildlife Trust. Not only is this a subject I feel personally very passionate about, it's also the right thing to do to save nature – having diverse communities all working together makes us a more powerful and effective force.

At Sussex Wildlife Trust inclusion is not just a good intention, we are actively doing things to be more inclusive and diverse. We have welcomed groups from many different backgrounds to our nature reserves, especially at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and The Deneway. And thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we have just launched a project dedicated to enabling more diverse communities across Sussex to take action for nature.

Part of creating an inclusive environment is making sure everyone feels welcome and respected. For example, using correct pronouns is a small but significant way we do this, and it ensures we are not making potentially harmful assumptions about people. This summer our *Secrets Beneath the Sea* exhibition on Brighton seafront celebrated "fluid and fabulous" marine life, just one of the many ways we are helping diverse communities feel seen and encouraged to connect with wildlife.

I'm proud to lead an organisation that is connecting people of all backgrounds to nature and enabling people to take meaningful action to help save it.

Thank you for your support.



Wildlife Rangers GGP © Roz Bassford



Cuttlefish © Paul Parsons

Standing up for wildlife

Coming soon: **South Coast Marine Recovery Project**

For the sea to recover and truly thrive again, we need bold ideas and big ambition. We're joining forces with Wildlife Trusts in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and Hampshire & Isle of Wight to boost marine recovery efforts right along the south coast.

You'll find the latest updates here:
wtru.st/south-coast-marine



Separately, we're already working to care for our shared coastline and the sea, and we're all facing common threats and pressures like water pollution and unsustainable fishing practices. Together, we have a better chance of tackling these challenges at scale and giving marine life the space it needs to thrive across our whole southern coastline.

We're creating an ambitious new community-led project so that we can work at a seascape level to create real, lasting change.

Development of the South Coast Marine Recovery project is well underway and due to complete in March 2027. Over the summer, the project team has been collecting ecological and environmental data as well as local knowledge, views and ideas to co-create a shared vision for a healthy, thriving south coast from Sussex to Cornwall. The subsequent delivery phase will span several years, putting this plan into action to create long-term change so that nature, coastal businesses and local communities can flourish together.

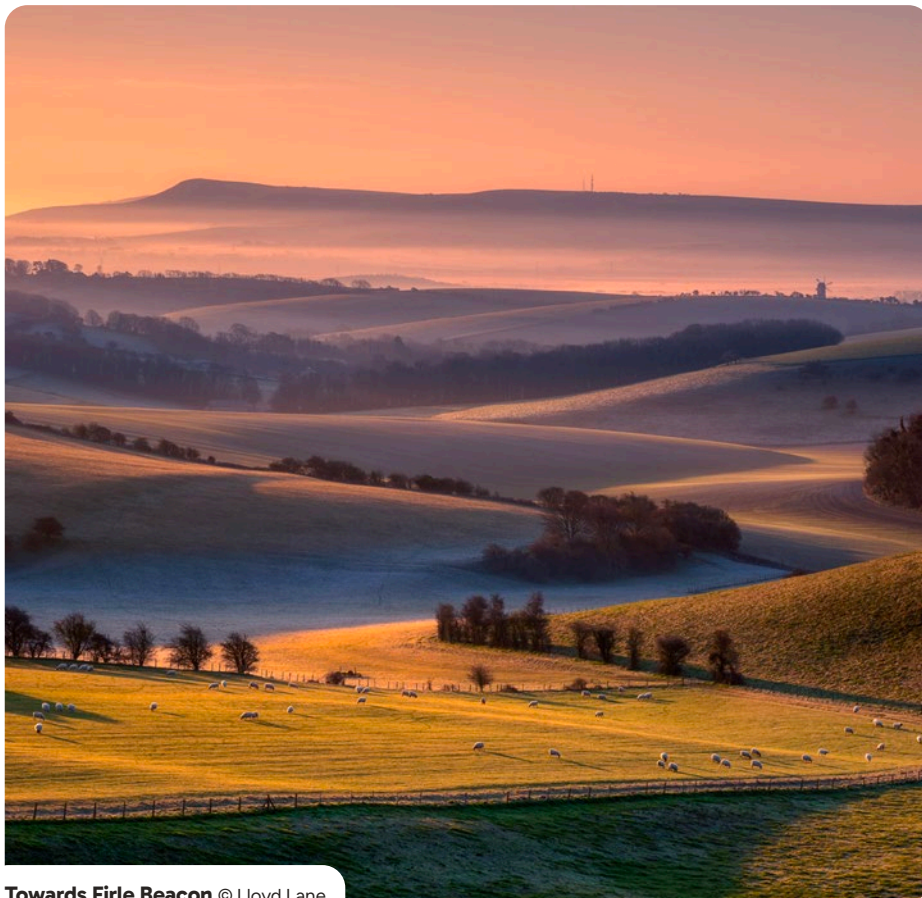
Local Nature Recovery Strategies

The first Local Nature Recovery Strategies for West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove have now been published. Shaped by the views, knowledge and dedication of over 2,000 local people, they set out eight principles, 24 priorities, and over 100 practical actions that can be taken at all scales to help create, enhance and connect habitats and support species across our area.

These are two of 48 Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) being developed across England. LNRS are a statutory new approach to reverse the

decline in biodiversity by agreeing, at the local level, what needs to be done and guiding where this can be targeted to achieve the greatest benefit for wildlife and the wider environment.

Over two years in the making, publication is an important milestone. It marks the end of the strategies' preparation phase and the start of a new one: implementation. This will build on the amazing work already happening across Sussex, from ambitious landscape-scale initiatives to grass roots efforts by communities and volunteers, while encouraging new actions for nature that we can all take forward.



Towards Firle Beacon © Lloyd Lane

Brighton Marina dredge disposal

Since our successful legal challenge last year, which quashed the ten-year licence granted to Brighton Marina to dump dredged sediment within Beachy Head West Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), a new application for a one-year licence was submitted in March. We objected to this new application and set up an e-action to encourage you to have your say – and more than 6,000 of you did just that! This incredible response overwhelmed the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) and had a big influence on their next steps.

At the time of writing, the MMO still hasn't decided whether to grant the one-year licence due to ongoing discussion of the issues raised during consultation. We now know that Brighton Marina is considering an alternative disposal site at Newhaven, which is outside the MCZ boundary. This is a step in the right direction, but concerns remain, so we'll need to look at the detail if and when a new licence application is submitted. In the meantime, we'll continue working to secure a sustainable long-term solution.

Henri Brocklebank, Director of Conservation, said:

"The publication of the Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Sussex is a landmark moment for nature recovery in our counties. Developed through the knowledge, expertise and commitment of so many people and organisations, these strategies provide a shared vision and practical roadmap for restoring wildlife, creating resilient ecosystems and bringing people closer to nature.

Sussex Wildlife Trust has proudly supported this process from the outset, and we are immensely grateful to everyone who has contributed. The real opportunity now lies in turning ambition into action. We are committed to working with partners, communities, businesses and land managers across Sussex to ensure these strategies drive meaningful and lasting recovery for nature, placing the LNRS at the heart of decision-making and delivery for years to come.

Sussex is the place to be for Nature Recovery and these documents will be core to our work going forward."



Explore your LNRS documents and interactive Local Habitat Map at SussexNatureRecovery.org.uk



Meeting Chris Ward MP
© Office of Chris Ward

Conservation without evidence is just vibes



Lou Mamalis
Monitoring and
Evidence Manager
(she/her)

I joined the Trust last year as the Monitoring and Evidence Manager, a new role within the Reserves Team, aimed at driving outcomes through evidence. I work on all things surveys, data and analysis. A big part of my role is to create the ecological monitoring plan for our reserves and to coordinate surveys to collect the data needed. This plan involves a list of all the things we know and, more importantly, those things we don't know. This process is important, as the data we collect directly informs conservation management and ensures we're doing the best we can to support wildlife.

We collect data on the species, communities and habitats on our reserves, so we know what to manage for. For example, bird species on a wetland, plant species on a chalk grassland or butterfly species along a transect can indicate the habitat quality, informing our management decisions. It's also important to collect this data long term and track changes over time. This helps us to be adaptive in our approach. We can experiment with management approaches and,

through monitoring, see if habitats and species are responding positively. Our conservation work at Sussex Wildlife Trust is continuously being improved based on the evidence that we collect. For example, we created new wetland habitats at **Pevensey Marshes** and our monitoring this year has shown positive results, such as the return of breeding Lapwing and presence of wintering Shoveler, Teal and Shelduck.

If the data shows things are not working, then we can reassess and adjust our approach. Evidencing our work is also important for securing funding for future work. If we can demonstrate to funders that our interventions are having positive outcomes for wildlife and that we collect data in a rigorous and consistent way they are more likely to support further work.



Clouded Yellow butterfly © Bob Eade



Lapwing display © Barry Yates

Case study

The data we collect at **Rye Harbour Nature Reserve** is an excellent example of how we use evidence to benefit species and make management decisions. This site is nationally important due to the presence of unique habitats that provide resources for numerous species. Rye Harbour is designated for its bird populations, supporting endangered species, such as Little Tern, Common Tern, Lapwing and Ringed Plover. To ensure our management is working for these species we count the number of breeding pairs and calculate their productivity. Productivity is the number of successful fledglings a pair have per year, giving a measure of how successful birds are at reproducing. This involves many visits, a lot of careful watching and counting of birds! Our surveyors pair this with drone photography, which requires special scientific consents. This is particularly successful for colony breeders, such as Sandwich Terns, as the aerial view enables us to count nesting pairs more accurately. This data is vital to understand the population trends of these species.



Little Tern © Hugh Clark FRPS



Ringed Plover incubating eggs © Barry Yates

As well as monitoring the bird population trends we monitor predation on site. Trail cameras are used across the site to monitor when Foxes breach the predator fences. We have also more recently started monitoring the avian predation on site. These two methods ensure that our response to predation is evidence based. By understanding the bird populations and how predation is impacting them we can then focus our management decisions on key habitats or species. For example, breeding Lapwing have declined on certain areas of the reserve in recent years as they had not been adequately protected from mammal predators. Therefore we have been able to focus on improving the predator fencing in those areas to increase Lapwing breeding success. Monitoring the bird populations each year makes us aware of any changes needed and we are always on the look out for new interventions to try.

Reserves focus

– The Lewes Downs



The Lewes Downs sit to the east of Lewes, between the River Ouse and the picturesque village of Glynde. The beautiful, gently rolling hills of Malling Down and Southerham Farm rise up from Lewes and are a dominant feature of the landscape here. Our ancestors cleared these hills thousands of years ago and they have been maintained as open grasslands ever since, punctuated in places by the chalk pits used in agriculture and local industry. Bronze Age tumuli and ancient field systems can easily be seen from Lewes itself and the hills have been important to writers, poets and artists for centuries.

The long history of sheep grazing across these downs also means that the hills are an important haven for wildlife too. The soft, springy turf, known to us as chalk grassland, is one of the most species-rich habitats in Sussex, and we have recorded over 1,800 species here. The soils are nutrient-poor and usually very shallow, sitting directly on the chalk deposits below. This infertility has led to an incredibly diverse collection of plants that have all adapted to the dry, poor soils and the constant grazing of sheep. One square metre could hold up to 40 different flowering plant species, including Round-headed Rampion, Dropwort, Squinancywort, Fairy Flax, Salad Burnet, Eyebright, Birds-foot Trefoil, Kidney Vetch and Horseshoe Vetch. If you need more botanical jewels, look out for the orchids – scattered across these changing and dynamic grasslands you will find Musk, Pyramidal, Fragrant and Burnt Orchids. Some of these are only a few centimetres tall so you need to get down and explore these grasslands carefully.

These reserves are now protected for their wildlife and cultural values and form part of the Lewes Downs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Only 4% of the South Downs National Park is made up of this rare habitat and much of that is in poor condition, isolated or so small that grazing and management are barely possible. We are lucky to have over 200 hectares of nature reserve in the Lewes Downs and that is in part why we have over 30 species of butterfly here, including Adonis Blue, Chalkhill Blue, Silver-spotted Skipper, Grizzled Skipper and Dingy Skipper, alongside 500 species of beetle, numerous bees and other invertebrates. We regularly see Peregrines, Ravens and Buzzards feeding here, and hear the sound of young birds of prey perfecting their avian skills in the valleys.



Mark Monk-Terry
Area Manager –
Central (he/him)



For us to continue to enjoy the comforting sound of Skylarks, rare orchids and stunning butterflies, we need to ensure this long line of management continues. To fully understand what's happening on our reserves, we undertake regular ecological surveys, including detailed invertebrate surveys by Graeme Lyons every 10 years, vegetation surveys, including orchids, fixed point photography, aerial and drone imaging. At Malling, we have been monitoring our butterflies using the National Survey System since 1984. For the past 30 years, this has been undertaken by Crispin Holloway, who took over from his father.

Working with ecologists to produce long-term datasets allows us to build up evidence of impacts on species on individual reserves.

With butterflies, we can see changes to the specialist chalk grassland species, such as Adonis Blue, Grizzled Skipper and Silver-spotted Skipper. These species rely on a short sward with specific chalk grassland plants and often like bare ground or hoof prints to bask in. The Adonis Blue lays its eggs on Horseshoe Vetch, but also needs black and red ants that protect the caterpillar in the ants' nest. This is a beautiful, symbiotic relationship where the ants obsessively attend the caterpillar, which then feeds the ants a honeydew solution in return. In fact, the ants drum on the honey gland of the caterpillar, which is also able to create noise akin to singing to placate or communicate with the ants!

One of the biggest threats to the future of our chalk grassland associated species is the loss of grazing, which in turn leads to the development of scrub (such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elder, Dogwood, Wild Privet and worst of all Cotoneaster!) and woodland across the protected grasslands. Historically there would have been hundreds of thousands of sheep across the downs and trees and scrub would also have been cut for various traditional and domestic uses. These days we graze the reserves less intensively and prefer not to have any sheep on the chalk grasslands between April and August so we can maximise flowering. Cattle can still be used to lightly graze in summer months. With subtle changes to grazing patterns, we see scrub developing across the grasslands and need to manage it to maintain a balance between open grasslands and small scrub areas.



Above: Adonis Blue caterpillar with ant © Graham Hubbard



Left: Adonis Blue (male) © Graeme Lyons

We aim to produce a mosaic of scattered scrub at various heights and shapes to provide essential habitat for birds, mammals, invertebrates, fungi, mosses and lichens. Scrub also acts as a wildlife corridor to join areas of habitat or creates stepping stones for species to move across a landscape. Many birds will be roosting in scrub, and mid-summer, Whitethroats and Lesser Whitethroats can be heard. Hawthorn provides an important supply of nectar in the spring, followed up by a supply of berries for many species over winter. Scrub often contains deadwood, which is essential to some invertebrates. Others feed on or mine the leaves. Brown Hairstreak butterflies lay eggs in the protection of the scrub.

Nature conservation is often about getting the balance right. We're undertaking extensive scrub management at Malling Down and Southerham for that reason. Starting autumn 2026, the work will last three years and help remove some scrub, regenerate other areas of scrub and start a process of chalk grassland restoration, where scrub is removed and prevented from return by appropriate grazing.

You may see changes to the reserves over the coming years and it may look drastic, but be assured that some scrub will always be left to create the perfect habitat mix of open grassland and scrub with plenty of variation between.

Keep an eye on social media and our website for updates.



Horseshoe Vetch © Victoria Hume

An Atlas of the Seaweeds of Sussex

Meet author, Ian Tittley



Emma Chaplin
Communications
Officer, Media
(she/her)

Why are seaweeds important to us?

Everyone, every day, uses a product that comes from seaweed. Think on that when brushing your teeth or eating an ice cream!

What are some of your favourite common names?

I get a giggle from Showy Shaggy Hairweed (*Ulothrix speciosa*), Bunny Ears (*Lomentaria articulata*) and 'Little Fat Sausageweed' (*Champia parvula*)!

How did you become interested in seaweed?

My interest in natural history started at school, which led to working life at the Natural History Museum. I became a researcher on seaweeds and a Trustee of Kent Wildlife Trust, setting up its 'marine group', a precursor to Shoresearch.

I was fascinated by the magnificent chalk coasts of Kent and Sussex. I published *A new atlas of the seaweeds of Kent* ten years ago, then decided Sussex should be next.

I've visited and recorded in every area of coast in Sussex, and Sussex Wildlife Trust Seasearch colleagues did 40 dives to sample subtidal seaweed. Altogether, we've brought together over 19,000 past and present records. Currently 408 species of seaweed (60% of British species) are known for Sussex, and I've confirmed 322 of them.

What changes have you seen?

The most dramatic was the near loss of the county's kelp species. Gains include the arrival of non-native species, such as *Caulacanthus okamurae* (Pom-pom Weed) and *Sargassum muticum* (Wireweed), both of which have changed the seashore seaweed community.

The native species *Chondracanthus acicularis* (Creephorn) has spread eastwards along the Sussex coast, probably due to the warming of our inshore waters.

Who is the Atlas aimed at?

Anyone interested in seaweed! It's a resource for professional marine biologists, but it also has simple descriptions, maps and illustrations, which are helpful for Shoresearch citizen scientists.



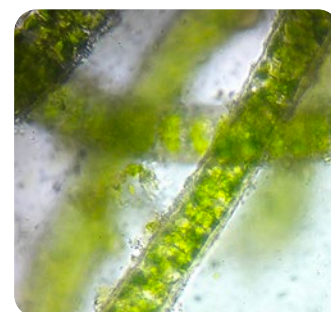
Ian Tittley © Kai Hilton



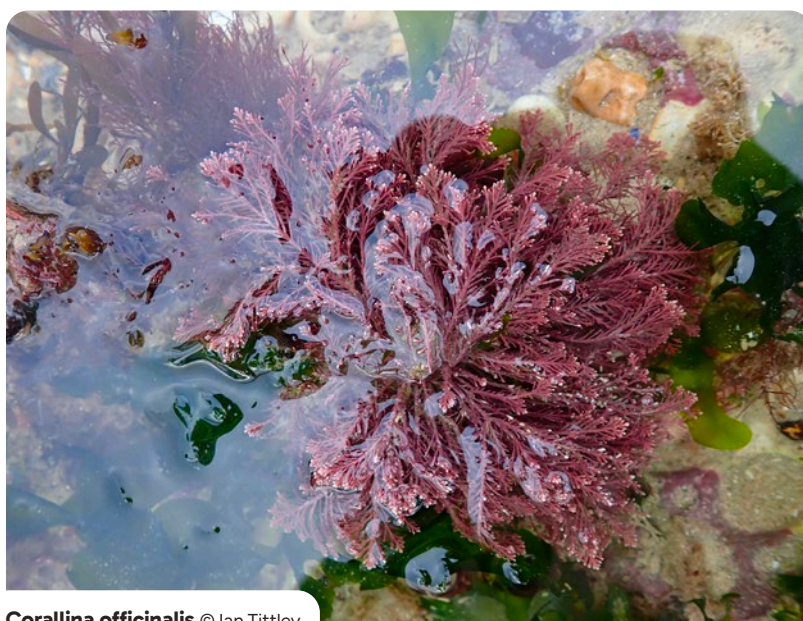
Non-native species
Sargassum muticum
© Ian Tittley



Desmarestia aculeata winter
form, NHM herbarium, Brighton



Showy Shaggy Hairweed
Ulothrix flacca © Ian Tittley



Corallina officinalis © Ian Tittley

An Atlas of
the Seaweeds
of Sussex





Pondering ponds

Common Frog
© Chas Spradbery

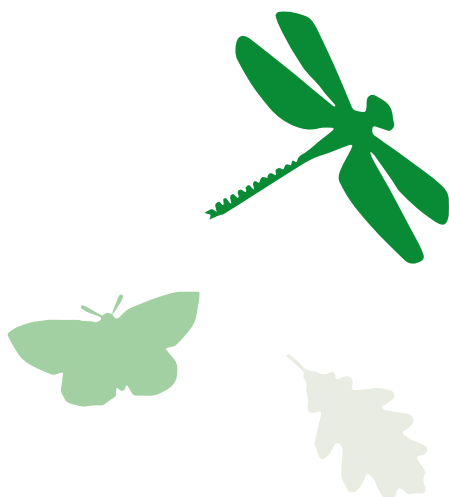
**By garden writer, broadcaster,
and TV presenter, Kate Bradbury**

A pond is one of the best wildlife habitats going. Whether it's in your garden, local park or nature reserve, these unassuming bodies of water are a central hub for all sorts of species. Foxes, Badgers, Hedgehogs and other mammals drink from ponds, birds use them for drinking and bathing, and amphibians and some invertebrates breed in them. Predators like Grass Snakes, Herons and bats use them to hunt. There are secondary habitat provisions too; mud for House Martins and Mason Bees to make their nests, and flowers for pollinators to feed from. A friend of mine was recently visited by four Greylag Geese, who splashed around her pond with much gleeful honking.

Ponds support so much life, yet in the UK it's estimated that half (some 400,000) have been lost since 1900. This is due to intensification of farmland, urbanisation and loss or degradation of wild areas. Happily, it's estimated there are 18,000 ponds in Sussex alone, excluding those in gardens, although remaining ponds are often polluted from nitrogen run-off from farms, petrol/oil run-off from roads or pesticides from flea-treated dogs. Freshwater life has consequently suffered staggering declines, so the more ponds we dig to replace those that have been lost or broken, the better.

Pond perfect for dragonflies

© Simon Linington



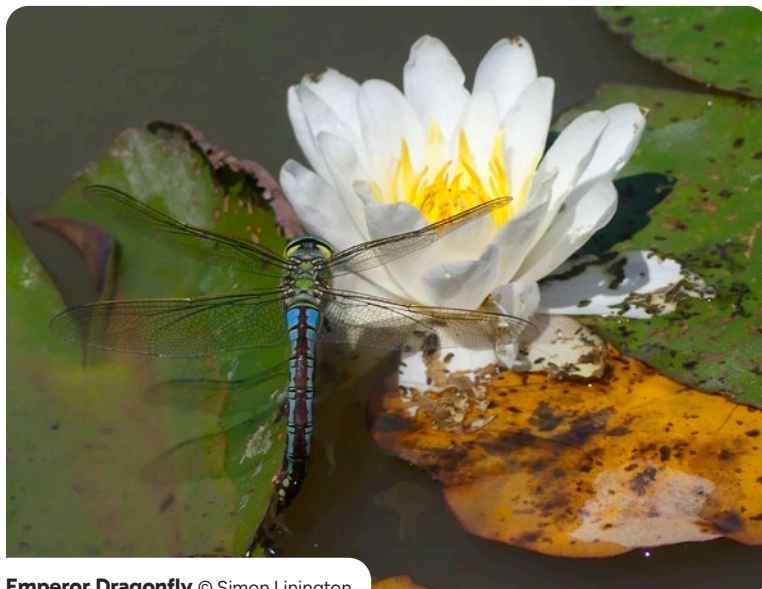
What makes a really good pond?

A good pond is a complex pond, meaning it has lots of different habitats within one. This means water at different depths, a variety of plants sitting in different areas (below water, on the surface, around the edge), boggy marginal areas where the water meets the land, and dead wood and stones, which can provide hiding places for aquatic invertebrates and somewhere for algae to grow. Combined, these offer the most opportunities for the greatest number of species – the more complex your habitat, the more wildlife you will attract.

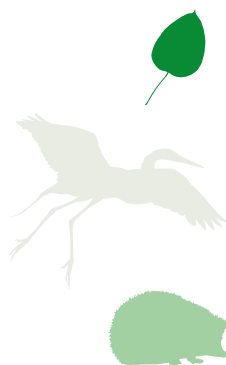
Small ponds are less complex than large ponds, simply because of space. If you have a balcony or small patio, however, you can make a good container pond using an old baby bath or Belfast sink. Just make sure it has a 'frog ladder' of bricks or logs for easy access. Although small ponds may not attract as much wildlife as a larger pond that's dug into the ground, plants and stones can increase complexity and attract more species.

In gardens, many of us opt for a pre-formed plastic pond you can buy from garden centres. These are largely designed for fish and have steep sides with just a couple of shelves for marginal plants to sit. They do well for newts and some invertebrate life such as mosquitoes, midges and sometimes dragonflies, but they don't provide the shallow areas that amphibians and other species need for breeding. If you have one of these ponds you can add complexity with stones and plants to create the shallows and shelter so many species need.

A good-sized garden pond can be circular or kidney shaped: around three metres long by two metres wide. Dig down to a maximum depth of around a metre, but make sure it has plenty of shallows, as this is where most of the life is. Add a variety of native pond plants in different areas and grow plants around the edges so froglets and toadlets have shelter from the sun and predators when they leave in summer. Make sure some of the shallows get sun in the morning, as Frogs seem to prefer to spawn in water that gets the morning sun. This is probably because it warms up more quickly and melts any ice that may have formed the previous night – a clever strategy to keep tadpoles and spawn alive through a cold spring. You could even add a seating area near the pond, so you can sit and enjoy it after it's been created.



Emperor Dragonfly © Simon Linington



Once you've built your pond, the wildlife will come – but don't expect it to come straight away. If there are no ponds nearby, there may not be any local amphibians to jump straight in. In my pond in Brighton, it took two years for Frogs to spawn, four years for Toads to spawn and five before I spotted my first newt. Now they behave as if they had always been there. Never introduce tadpoles or spawn to a pond, as you may unwittingly spread diseases, but also because your pond may not be right for them – if it's too deep or shady the tadpoles may not survive. And, if the Frogs don't come, try not to worry. Your pond is still a lifeline for other freshwater life that has suffered from the loss of ponds nationally.

My favourite thing about ponds is that you never know what will turn up next. Perhaps some Greylag Geese?

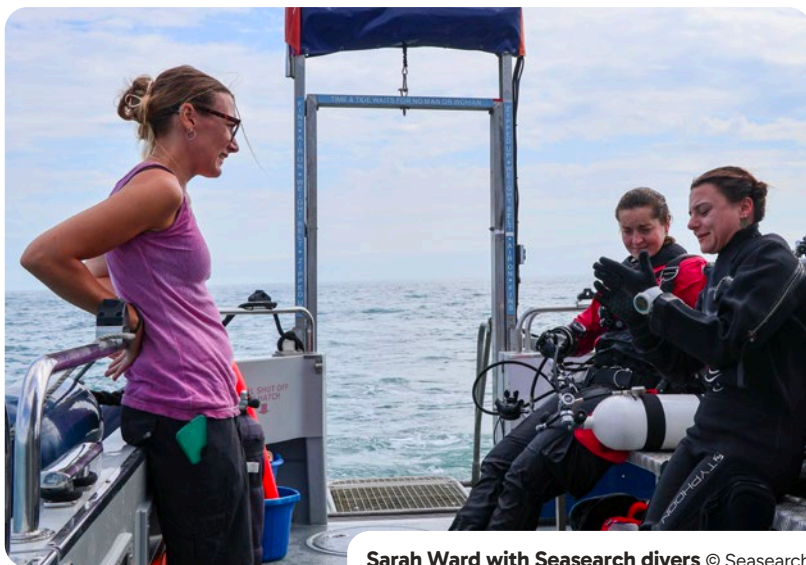
Kate Bradbury has published many books on wildlife gardening – including *How to Create a Wildlife Pond* with the RHS.

Below:
Siskin drinking
© Maria McGrath

Right:
Pond in Lewes
© Emma Chaplin



Life of brine: the radical act of noticing



Sarah Ward with Seasearch divers © Seasearch



Charlie Peverett
Digital
Communications
Lead (he/him)

“We have to do something.”

If you're reading the Sussex Wildlife Trust magazine, you likely spend some of your time thinking this, and maybe saying it out loud, in respect to the state of the natural world. So much has already been destroyed. More seems about to go the same way without urgent change.

It's clearly a time to take action, to do something. But it's not always so clear what the right 'something' is to do.

Those of us who would defend nature haven't always got this right. At times, the urge to 'do' runs ahead of understanding how things really work. Reintroducing a lost species, radically changing the way a place is managed, even announcing a new project, all can have unintended downsides. Sometimes not so good for people or for wildlife.

In these cases, what's often missing is good data – the patiently gathered kinds of knowledge that tell us what's actually going on, and what kinds of change we might see if we choose to intervene.

This is as true at sea as it is on land. The marine environment is under pressure as never before, as anyone who has watched *Ocean with David Attenborough* will know. From plastic pollution and

habitat destruction to overfishing and coral bleaching, it's challenge after challenge. Thanks to eye-opening filmmaking and ocean advocacy, growing numbers of people are speaking up for change.

But as to what we should do in a particular place? That's not always so easily answered. While few parts of the dry land in Sussex go unseen by human eyes, the world under the waves is largely invisible.

Take, for example, East Sussex mussel gardens – the kind of places that exist quietly, hidden under some metres of salty water, just a few miles off the coast.

“We discovered these mussel gardens on my first Seasearch trip,” says Sarah Ward, who co-ordinates Seasearch at Sussex Wildlife Trust. “We'd chosen a random spot to dive to and see what we could find.”

'Garden' is a cute way to describe somewhere less dense than a continuous bed of mussels – a place where they are dotted about in clumps.

Given the right conditions, Blue Mussels can form the basis of entire habitats. Pockets of mussels might be the forerunners of more extensive 'biogenic reefs' made up of big colonies, and all the marine life that can thrive along with them. But in their early stages they can be subtle structures. They hardly loom up in front of a dive camera like the hulk of the Titanic.

“We would have no idea it existed if we hadn't happened to dive there that day,” Sarah tells me, as we prepare to return to the spot she first visited, almost a decade before.

Seasearch is a national programme that co-ordinates experienced volunteer divers to survey life on the sea floor. In Sussex, it's managed by Sussex Wildlife Trust. Pairs of divers drop into unexplored locations, and revisit others. They refine a picture with every Spider Crab, Piddock and Warty Doris they log.





Above:
Mussel garden

© Paul Parsons

**Below: Warty
Doris sea slug**

© Sarah Ward



Witnessing a Seasearch mission for the first time, it's hard not to be struck by what it demands of us humans to visit the sea floor. There's the gear of course – the tanks, the heavy waterproof suits, fins and masks, the buoyancy aids, the cameras. But there's also skill, determination and patience.

Sussex seabeds don't give themselves away easily – on one of the dives I attended visibility extended to just a metre, and no-one seemed surprised. If you want crystal-clear waters to drop into, Sussex will be low on your list.

Sometimes, not much is found. Large areas of seabed have little visible life on the surface. In some cases, that's natural, because an area is dominated by sand or fine sediment, and there's not much to attach to – the life that's present tends to have burrowed under the surface. Elsewhere, it's because the seabed has been repeatedly clattered by the heavy towed fishing gear of trawlers, and life hasn't had a chance to re-establish.

But whether life is found in abundance or hardly at all, it's invaluable information.

Years of Seasearch data contributed to the designation of our Sussex Marine Conservation zones, as well as the decision to exclude trawling from 300km² of the Sussex near shore in 2021.

Meanwhile those 'mussel gardens' we revisited in summer 2026 now lie in the most recently designated area to ban bottom-towed fishing gear, to the west of Beachy Head. Over time, repeat searches will help reveal what impact a reduction in fishing pressure is having here, and whether nature is finding a way to lead its own recovery.

In these urgent times, when 'something' simply must be done, perhaps it's a radical act to pay attention to the details. Perhaps it's the care with which we notice that can drive the most powerful actions.

Sussex Wildlife's Trust approach to marine conservation means we focus on championing the removal of pressures that have been damaging to the marine environment, enabling and supporting nature to recover at its own pace.

Marine appeal

Our Sussex seas are a wondrous habitat, home to incredible wildlife including mussels, seals and dolphins. Yet much of this marine life is hidden from view and under threat from climate change and damaging fishing practices. If we don't know what's there, we can't protect it.

This autumn, we are launching an appeal to support our dedicated marine staff and Shoresearch and Seasearch volunteers, who survey our shorelines and dive to the seafloor gathering vital evidence. Their data underpins all our marine conservation work, helping secure protections such as the Dolphin Head Highly Protected Marine Area.

Part of the Wild Sussex project.

**Please donate
today**



Lovely Lepidoptera!



Speckled Yellow © Bob Foreman

Moths (and butterflies) belong to the order of insects known as Lepidoptera, derived from the Greek words for scaly wings. These minute scales create an extraordinary array of colours and patterns.

In the UK we have about 2,500 species of moth. It's a difficult number to pin down because new species are turning up all the time. In Sussex we have records of around 2,000 of these.

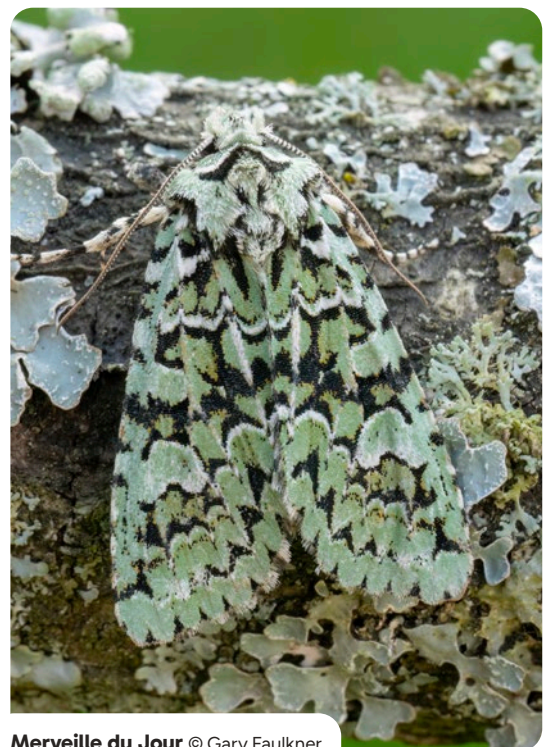
Does size matter?

Two-thirds are considered micro-moths and the rest, macro-moths. Confusingly, the Mother of Pearl (a micro-moth) is larger than some butterfly species! And the beautiful, tiny Rosy Marbled (a macro moth) is as small as many micros. This mismatch can be confusing for beginners trying to identify moths.

The variety of shapes and sizes of moths is huge, from the Sorrel Dot (one of the world's smallest moths with a wingspan of as little as 3 mm) to our largest native moth, the Privet Hawk-moth, that can have a wingspan of up to 120 mm.



Bob Foreman
Biodiversity Data
Specialist (he/him)



Merveille du Jour © Gary Faulkner

Eating habits

Most adult moths are nectivorous – they feed on nectar from flowers, sucking it up using their proboscis. Many species are vital, if underappreciated, pollinators of wild and cultivated flowers.

Others have specially adapted proboscises, which they use to suck sugary juices from rotting fruit or from sap runs on tree trunks.

However, some species of moth, such as the Emperor Moth, don't feed at all as adults. They don't have functioning mouth parts and rely solely on the fat reserves that they built up as caterpillars.

Moth caterpillars usually feed on plants. Some are specialists, others are less fussy. Bee Moth and Wax Moth caterpillars feed in the nests of bees and wasps. Wax Moth tend to feed mainly on the honeycomb, but Bee Moth caterpillars will eat the bee larvae and pupae, honey and detritus in the nest.

And of course everyone's favourite, the Common Clothes Moth, one of just a few species whose caterpillars will feed on most of the contents of your house, but with a definite preference for anything made of or containing wool.

Creatures of the night?

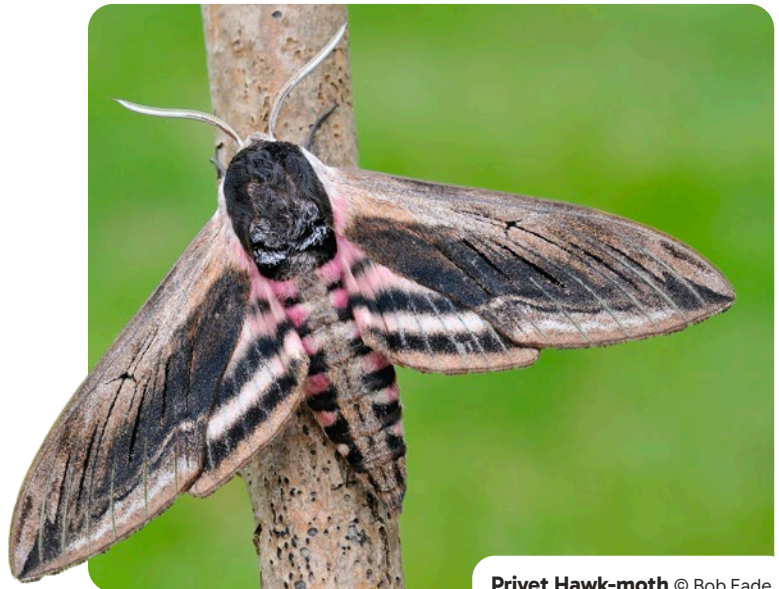
While moths are predominantly night-fliers, many can be seen in the daytime, and one or two only fly in the daytime.

Mother Shipton (the name comes from the pattern on its wings which resembles the profile of the 17th century Yorkshire soothsayer) and Speckled Yellow are moths that can easily be mistaken for little butterflies as they buzz from flower to flower in meadows or woodland rides.

During the daytime, the night-fliers hide themselves away in the hope of avoiding being predated by hungry birds. Many species simply disappear, having evolved elaborate camouflage; others disguise themselves as things that a bird is not going to want to eat.

Bird poo or moth? Mothsters of disguise

Many species of moth that have similar black and white markings and a tendency to rest on the upper surfaces of leaves or branches look like tiny dollops of bird poo. Birds unsurprisingly avoid them (and when I'm out looking for moths in the daytime,



Privet Hawk-moth © Bob Eade

I often get fooled into thinking that small dollops of bird poo are, in fact moths. It's disappointing when that happens!)

Other examples of masters of disguise – the Buff-tip looks for all the world like a short bit of rotten Birch twig. Merveille du Jour, when seen in isolation, appears as a beautifully patterned array of mint-green, black and white, but at rest on a lichen-covered tree trunk, becomes completely invisible.

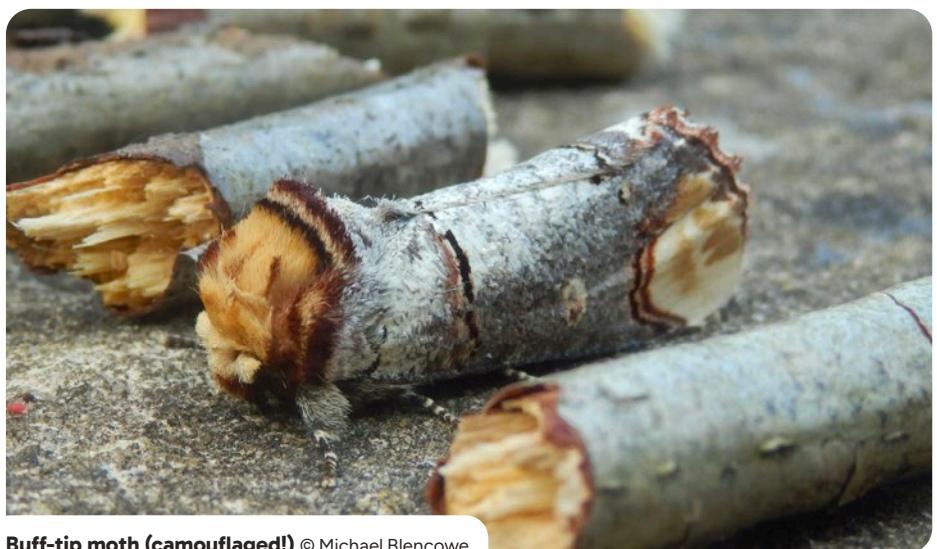
Moth ears and sounds

Once a moth has managed to get through the day without being eaten by a bird, its next challenge is to avoid the attentions of hungry bats at night. To help, many moths have 'ears' (tympanic organs) on their bodies and can hear the echolocation calls of bats, allowing them to take evasive action. Some species emit sounds and high frequency clicks that interfere with bats' echolocation.

Privet Hawk-moths rub their wings together to make an off-putting hiss when they're disturbed.

Moth mating

The main way male and female moths find each other is by scent. Female Emperor Moths start emitting an attractive scent (pheromones) the moment they emerge from the pupa. Because of the extreme sensitivity of the male moth's giant feathery antennae (smelling organs), it's likely that the first thing that the female encounters is an eager male (or males) waiting to pounce. It is only after mating that the female Emperor Moth takes to the wing, setting off to find somewhere to lay her eggs. The males' sense of smell is so acute they can detect a female's scent and the direction from which it is coming from more than a mile.



Buff-tip moth (camouflaged!) © Michael Blencowe

Whatever makes you mappy

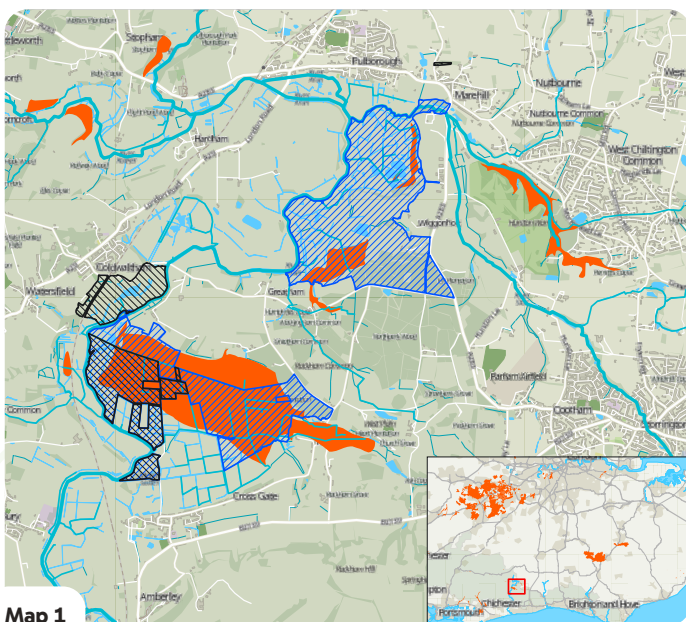


Millie Brand
GIS Senior Officer
(she/her)

When someone asks me what I do for work, I tell them I am a GIS Senior Officer. This usually draws a blank expression, and I quickly explain that I “make maps”. The truth is, GIS (Geographical Information System) is about more than just making maps. It’s about the hardware, software, data, processes, and people that make up a powerful system for visualising all kinds of data with a spatial component.

Approximately 20 people across the Trust use GIS in their day-to-day work, for mapping and producing reports on habitats, species, and conservation activities. My job is to provide training to colleagues in how to use GIS effectively and ensure they have access to the data they need for their roles. I have also created an online map for all staff to use, regardless of any prior GIS knowledge, so they have the boundaries for our nature reserves, projects, and Local Wildlife Sites at their fingertips.

Sometimes specialist GIS skills are needed for a project, such as creating the bespoke online maps for the Local Nature Recovery Strategies. This involved pulling together lots of different data from various stakeholders, cleaning it all up, and building an online map platform so anyone can see where actions for nature recovery could be implemented across Sussex.



Map 1



Map 2



Map 3

Seeing the wood for the trees (remote sensing case study)

One murky March morning I found myself clambering through the prickly understorey at Ebernoe Wildlands with Ranger Clive Lunny. Not a typical Tuesday for me, but we were here to collect some data about the presence and density of Holly to help inform the management of the reserve.

As you can imagine, Holly is a hostile subject to study, and I imagine that mapping the entire reserve from the ground could be a week-long expedition with nothing to show for it but the scratches on your arms. This is why we opted for collecting Holly data on a sample of the site, and I returned to my desk mostly unscathed to continue the work using GIS.

I used a technique called remote sensing classification, which is about studying the surface of the earth from above, using images collected by drones, aircraft, and satellites. I combined the data that Clive and I collected with some aerial images taken in December using a drone. Time of year is important for the images

Millie Brand surveying at Ebernoe Wildlands

© Clive Lunny



in this study: in winter the broadleaved branches are bare, so from this bird's eye view we can see through the canopy to the evergreen Holly below. Using remote sensing classification, GIS can identify areas of Holly by using the sample data as a reference, and comparing the colours and textures of these areas to the whole image to find matches.

Rangers can use this data to understand the extent and density of Holly at Ebernoe Wildlands. This can be used to plan which areas need some management intervention, while ensuring some patches are protected for the Barbastelle Bats the site is designated for. This is one example of where GIS is a powerful tool for providing greater insights to our nature reserves, to make informed decisions about their conservation.

Map 1: Amberley and Pulborough peat restoration

Peaty soils data created by BGS, Cranfield University (NSRI), and Ordnance Survey. Data supplied by Sussex Wildlife Trust. Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2022 Contains data from OS Zoomstack. Contains public sector information licenced under the Open Government Licence v.3.0. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2023.

Map 2: The Deneway Nature Reserve

Data supplied by Sussex Wildlife Trust Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2023. Contains data from OS Zoomstack.

Map 3: Ebernoe Common Nature Reserve

Data supplied by Sussex Wildlife Trust Contains OS data © Google.

Generation nature



Youth Rangers planting wildflowers at The Deneway © Archie Taplin

What does it take to help create a generation that genuinely cares for the natural world?

At Sussex Wildlife Trust, we're learning that the answer starts, not with our nature reserves, but with meeting young people where they are.

Sussex is a patchwork of green and blue spaces. But for many young people, visiting these nature spaces isn't possible. The cost of transport, not having the right clothing, and not feeling safe or welcome in spaces that don't yet feel like theirs, are all real barriers.

That's why we're working to celebrate every kind of nature encounter because all of it is a stepping stone towards caring for the natural world. A recent study showed that some of the smallest places can have the biggest impact, for both communities and wildlife.

From the woodlands surrounding the University of Sussex, to Tilgate Park in Crawley, to allotments connected to food bank initiatives, we're showing up in places where young people already are. And one of our most exciting projects is The Deneway: a locked nature reserve in the heart of Brighton that is youth-led and welcomes everyone.

“It makes you slow down and immerse yourself in the local environment, rather than just walking past it. Seeing how much is around you is really special.”

Youth Ranger, Will (they/them)



Anna Odedun
Head of Wilder
Communities (she/her)



Katie Bell
Youth Action
Officer (she/her)

“My favourite memory of The Deneway is people sitting by the fire, being funny and having a laugh with each other.”

Youth Ranger, Amy (she/her)



Youth Rangers fix a pond at Dorothy Stringer School © Katie Bell

The Deneway: where ecological and social values meet

Hedgehogs, Badgers and Toads are amongst the creatures that call The Deneway home. Not remarkable by conventional conservation metrics perhaps, but the reserve brings nature within reach of communities who might otherwise never have access to it.

The reserve hosts an Adult Hit Squad volunteer group, and offers free access to local charities, such as The Clare Project and Young Carers group. It's also home to our Youth Rangers, who meet regularly to carry out conservation tasks, learn about local species, and connect with each other around issues that matter to them.

Deneway Youth Rangers are encouraged to connect with Tilgate Youth Rangers and take part in conservation days at Knepp and RHS Wisley, helping young people see they are part of a bigger movement.

“Actually being involved in what we do has meant that there's pride in seeing it thrive. I think it being youth-led is key to that, because we make the decisions.”

Youth Ranger, Will (they/them)



Tilgate Wildlife Rangers © Sam Roberts

“It helps you to upskill in a big way. As I got more involved, I helped lead some pond dipping and Forest School activities. And meeting other people meant, when I moved to a different location, I had connections.”

Youth Ranger, Erica (she/they)



Wildlife Rangers © Roz Bassford

Youth-led, not top-down

As important as the nature reserve being safe and accessible, is how we engage. We've stopped telling young people what to do and now work alongside them. We've set up a monthly Youth Forum where young people share ideas and act as co-designers of events and sessions. Two youth representatives now sit on our board of Trustees.

This shift has unlocked real creativity. Young people want to run a silent disco litter pick on the beach, make art about nature, and learn how to campaign for it. Given space to try things, fail, and try again, they have found solutions that traditional conservation approaches miss.

Growing custodians for the future

We're just at the beginning of our Youth Action journey. But already we've seen the power of giving young people the opportunity to engage meaningfully with nature on their terms.

Some young people arrive already knowing a great deal, others never thought of nature as being for them. All start to think differently about the natural world, and their place in it.

“I find it's easier to socialise and learn from people here.”

Youth Ranger, Amir (he/him)

To get involved in our Youth Action programme or use The Deneway for your community group, email swtcommunities@sussexwt.org.uk



Brighton Pavilion BioBlitz © Katie Bell

All creatures great and small: the wonder of BioBlitzes



Jack Thompson
Wilder
Communities
Officer (he/him)



Katie Bell
Youth Action
Officer (she/her)



Julia Hoare
Volunteer
Coordinator
(she/her)



Archie Taplin & sweep net
© Julia Hoare



Youth Rangers at Wakehurst mammal trapping and bat recording © Katie Bell

What's a 'BioBlitz'?

BioBlitzes are events which aim to collect a snapshot of information about biodiversity within local greenspaces. The beauty of a BioBlitz is that it can be however long you want it to be; from weekend-long recording marathons (day and night!) at large nature reserves to two-hour sessions at your local park.

Why are they important?

BioBlitzes gather important data, but they also engage local communities with their local greenspaces, encouraging people to be aware of their local wildlife and to want to take action to protect it. It's the perfect example of citizen science in action.

By uploading findings to the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, this supports species records across the county. The data can be used to both protect the site and inform management decisions to improve biodiversity. All of which benefits both nature and local communities. These events also inspire the next generation of conservationists, giving young people the confidence, skills, and experience to play an active role in protecting nature.

Who can take part?

Anyone, from expert scientists, students, and hobbyists to local residents and families. A BioBlitz provides an excellent opportunity for local communities to learn, share experiences, and gain confidence and enthusiasm for these spaces and the wildlife you can find right on your doorstep.

What BioBlitzes have the Trust been involved with recently?

This year, our volunteer Youth Rangers (16-25 years old) have been exploring Sussex's wildlife through a range of BioBlitz activities.

In April, Youth Rangers, as well as members of the Wilder Communities Team, supported Brighton Museums with their Pavilion Garden BioBlitz, engaging local enthusiasts and casual visitors with building a picture of the scale of biodiversity that can be found at a local city greenspace.

At Wakehurst's annual BioBlitz in May, Youth Rangers joined ecologists for an unforgettable evening of bat surveying, learning how to use bat detectors, before heading out after dark to listen and watch as different species swooped overhead. Then they got hands-on with small mammal monitoring, helping safely survey mice and voles, before releasing them into wildflower meadows.

In June, the Adur and Worthing Hit Squad met local volunteers at Sustainable Sussex for a BioBlitz of a nature trail being created for the local community at Fen Farm in Sompting. Over 150 records were obtained over just a two-hour period!

Also in June, 55 volunteers joined staff for National Volunteers Week BioBlitzes, bringing together experts and enthusiasts to identify and record wildlife at Southerham Farm and Woods Mill Nature Reserves.

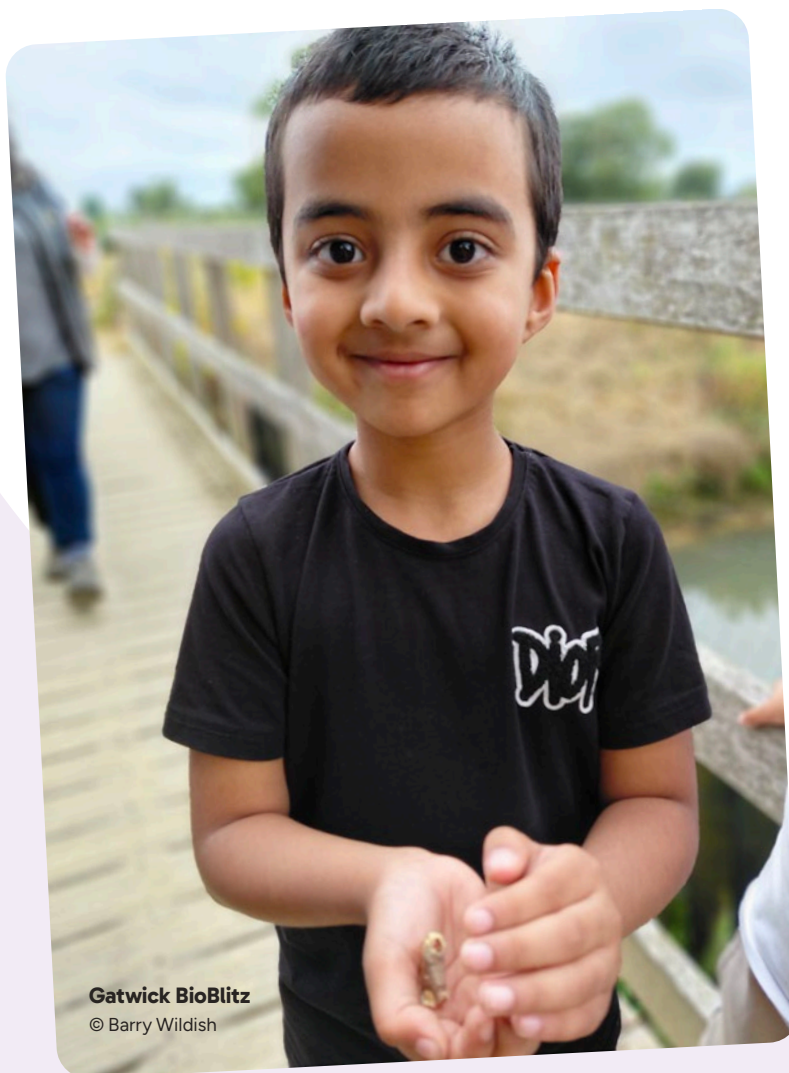
Both began with moth expert, Bob Foreman, opening traps. Despite rain, we recorded an impressive 134 species. Among highlights were a few firsts for the reserve species lists: the Great Twist moth at Woods Mill, a scarce and declining species in Sussex, and Variegated Golden Tortrix and Light Arches moths at Southerham Farm.

Another notable observation was Knapweed Broomrape at Southerham Farm, a parasitic species on the Sussex Rare Plant register.

The Southerham records included a wealth of chalk downland wildlife, such as Adonis Blue butterflies, Chalk Fragrant Orchids, Pyramidal Orchids and Skylarks. Plus five species of dung beetle! This demonstrates a healthy grassland ecosystem and the benefits of conservation grazing.

The survey at Woods Mill revealed an impressive range of woodland, wetland and grassland species, including Golden-bloomed Grey Longhorn beetles, Common Spotted Orchids, Reed Warblers and Small Red Damselflies, demonstrating the rich variety of habitats found within the reserve.

In July, Youth Rangers took centre stage at Woods Mill, leading a wildlife discovery day for younger people aged 12-16. Sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm, they taught participants how to carry out butterfly and dragonfly surveys, record wildlife sightings, and understand how their observations contribute to real conservation efforts.



Gatwick BioBlitz

© Barry Wildish



Woods Mill BioBlitz

© Julia Hoare

Keep an eye out for BioBlitzes in your area. Or, if you help to manage a local greenspace, you could set up your own BioBlitz! The **National BioBlitz Network** has a range of resources.

Staying alive beyond 1.5

– with our Wilder Projects



Scientists at the UK Met Office announced June 2026 as the hottest on record. As we closed our shutters during recurring heatwaves, I found myself thinking of the wildlife outside, searching desperately for water and shade. For species already in decline due to modern human activity, the shifting of climatic patterns they've evolved with over millennia spells disaster.



Louisa Jones
Project Support
Officer, Wilder
Horsham District
(she/her)

These past few years across Europe, we've begun to feel the disruption of wetter winters and hotter, drier summers: trends scientific modelling tells us will intensify as we continue to release carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. There is now lively debate as to when – not if – average global temperatures will routinely exceed the 1.5°C most nations agreed to work towards as an upper limit in 2015. In parallel with this, decades of research and practice across the natural and social sciences confirm what many of you will instinctively know: that nature is critical for both our wellbeing and the functioning of a healthy, secure society. In the coming decades we will need its bounty more than ever.

So, how are we turning this evidence into positive action in Sussex? While national policy and rhetoric have wavered recently with the political tides, Sussex Wildlife Trust has continued its commitment to improving local climate resilience for the benefit of wildlife and people, through its Wilder Projects partnerships with several District Councils.

Now in its seventh year, Wilder Horsham District works to create, improve, expand and connect wildlife habitats beyond nature reserves. Known somewhat drily in the scientific literature as 'Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures' (OECMs), these privately owned farms, smallholdings, businesses and community spaces are increasingly being recognised

as where nature recovery magic happens, precisely because they are places where people live, work and play. When our land advisors advise landowners to restore an old orchard (a source of water, food and shelter for an impressive range of creatures) or replace stock fencing with a traditional laid hedge (diminishing soil erosion and flooding), they not only create long-term landscape benefits, but motivate people to share their experiences and newfound knowledge with those around them. Psychological research shows this peer-to-peer sharing to be an extremely effective driver of behaviour change.

Our sister project, Wilder Ouse, is funded and supported by Lewes and Wealden District Councils to restore natural processes and ecological connectivity across a single river catchment, with a particular focus on supporting landowners to install and maintain natural flood management (NFM) measures.

The Wilder Projects family is now growing, thanks to a new, five-year partnership to apply our learnings to the creation of a Nature Recovery Network for the whole of Wealden District. Our Wilder projects are demonstrating that working in collaboration with local government is vital to deliver our shared goals of restoring 30% of nature by 2030 (an international target) and helping Sussex residents – and wildlife – to adapt to an increasingly unpredictable climate.

Left: Leaky dams
© WHD

Right: Orchard planting
© WHD



Betting our hedges



Tamara Jewell
Manager, Gatwick
Greenspace Partnership
(she/her)

Our hedge-laying project at Tilgate Park is a recent example of the work we do at Gatwick Greenspace Partnership, the culmination of extensive collaboration on the heathland this year with around 120 attending, children and young people, along with 95 adults chipping in over the winter to carry out heathland habitat maintenance.

We've been meaning to lay this hedge for many years, but it involves a lot of time and preparation. Close collaboration with landowners, in this case Crawley Borough Council (CBC), was key. Project Officers, Barry and Kevin, laboured hard to facilitate the gathering and transporting of numerous stakes and binders from other coppicing tasks carried out on sites in the area.



Hedge laying © Tamara Jewell



Weasel © Barry Clough

We enlisted experts to help. Luckily, we have some proficient hedge-laying skills amongst the adult volunteer group. Harry and Phil, Volunteer Reserve Managers at Gatwick, were incredibly good working with our Special Needs students from Manor Green College. Tony too was keen to share his expertise with the next generation of hedge layers and it was great to have him onboard with his billhook and bodger!

While working, we were visited by the public, by CBC volunteers, and by Sussex Wildlife Trust staff and trainees who came to learn about this important country craft.

Our Youth Rangers acquired lots of new skills, pleaching and binding like pros by the time the job was done.

We have been amazed at how quickly the hedge bounced back with new vigour. Youth Rangers in February were excited to spot a Weasel scurrying around. Sightings of Adders have been rare in recent years, and we are hoping this work will entice them back.

In July, the Crawley Youth Rangers hosted the Brighton Deneway group at Tilgate and were keen to share the results. It was lovely to see young people taking such pride in their efforts.

The roughly 50 metre long hedge now shelters a pocket of heathland at Tilgate providing a wildlife corridor for all sorts of birds, butterflies, reptiles and insects that thrive there, and with this habitat being rarer than rainforest, these species need all the help they can get.



Crawley Youth Rangers showing the Brighton Youth Rangers their hedge © Tamara Jewell



Sunrise at
Stedham Common
© Lloyd Lane

It all adds up to a better future for wildlife

For many of us the thought of writing our will might be something we'd rather delay thinking about if at all possible. It can feel uncomfortable and perhaps a little taboo. But if I were to tell you that over the past three years around 25% of our total income has come from gifts in wills (that's a quarter of all the amazing work we've achieved for wildlife) I hope you'd agree this helps to put a whole new positive perspective on the process.

Leaving a gift in your will is an incredibly empowering way to support the causes you believe in, helping to shape the future as you wish it to be.

It is deeply heartening to know that over the years, many of our valued supporters have left a gift in their will to help us continue the conservation work that they valued and supported during their lifetime. Managing nature reserves, using data and evidence to campaign for wildlife protections, engaging with schools and community groups, building our Discovery Centre, purchasing land, empowering others to take meaningful action for nature, along with all the other essential core functions that enable us to carry out our vital work.

If you have been meaning to write your will but haven't yet got around to it, you may be interested to learn that we've recently partnered with Make a Will Online so you can write a simple will for free from the comfort of your own home, with every will reviewed by a solicitor.

We appreciate that loved ones always come first and there's no obligation to leave a gift to the Trust, but every gift, no matter the size, really does amount to wonderful things for Sussex's precious wildlife.

To find out more about writing your will free of charge, please visit sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/legacy and click on 'Free will-writing services'.



We are grateful to the following supporters who bequeathed a gift to the Trust recently to help protect our local wildlife and wild spaces:

Avril Coulson, Katherine Lee, Beryl Jean Moore, Pauline Susan Hurst, Michael & Rachel Moriarty, Hazel Rosemary Freeman, Shirley Anne Beck, Mrs Timmis.



For more information about leaving a gift to the Trust in your will, please contact Gemma Pratt on gemma.pratt@sussexwt.org.uk 01273 497566

Donations in memory

We would like to express our warmest thanks to family and friends of the following people, who have so kindly made a donation towards our important wildlife conservation work as a lasting tribute:

Adrian Miller, Nanny Ellard, Gillian Monument, Rosemary Grant, Lawrence & Iris Robinson, Ruth Till MBE, Jill Waller, June Flahey, Helena Joan Woodhouse, Leon Neve, Jane English, Craig Roberts, Joan Regan, Julia Wright, Paul Wright,

Oliver Hayward, Sonya Mackay, Jean Fricker, Martin Robinson, Derek Fraser, Maureen Wood, Barbara Jackson, Tim Benians.

sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/in-memory



Neurodivergence and nature



Grey Heron
© Kai Hilton



Kai Hilton
Communications
Officer, Design and
Visitor Experience
(he/him)

As a neurodivergent person, my brain is wired slightly differently. I am sensitive to noise and often find loud or crowded environments stressful. It's painful and overwhelming, my brain gets cloudy and I can't focus. Anxiety rises. Get me away from that crowded town centre with horns blaring and the dull hum of strangers' conversations. Get me to a flowing tidal river filled with lively waders, or a forest filled with fresh air and the sound of chattering, fluttering birds.

I'd describe my mind as a whirlwind of racing thoughts, ideas and generally, a random song. When in nature, it is one of the few times my mind is quiet, only focusing on my surroundings and not darting around to every erratic thought.

Armed with my trusty camera, I get endless amounts of joy from trekking around nature reserves, looking for my next photo target.

Being surrounded by nature is a soothing, sensory experience. Sometimes I stop and take a moment to close my eyes and tap into my senses. Listening to melodic bird calls, gentle creaking of the swaying trees, and muted tones as I tread along the earthy ground. Taking a deep breath to inhale the relaxing scents of damp foliage and sweet wildflowers, feeling the light breeze on my face.

My brain wiring also causes issues with my memory. Don't ask me what I did yesterday, when that appointment is, or where my keys are. But feel free to send me your blurry, pixelated bird photo in your local park and I'll gladly tell you what it is. Turns out having birds and nature as a special interest is a cheat code for overriding poor memory.

Finding an interest in nature over the past few years has brought me endless delight, a safe space, a hobby, artistic inspiration and most importantly, a passion.



Wild Flower Lawns and Meadows Ltd

25 years' colouring the gardens of England naturally

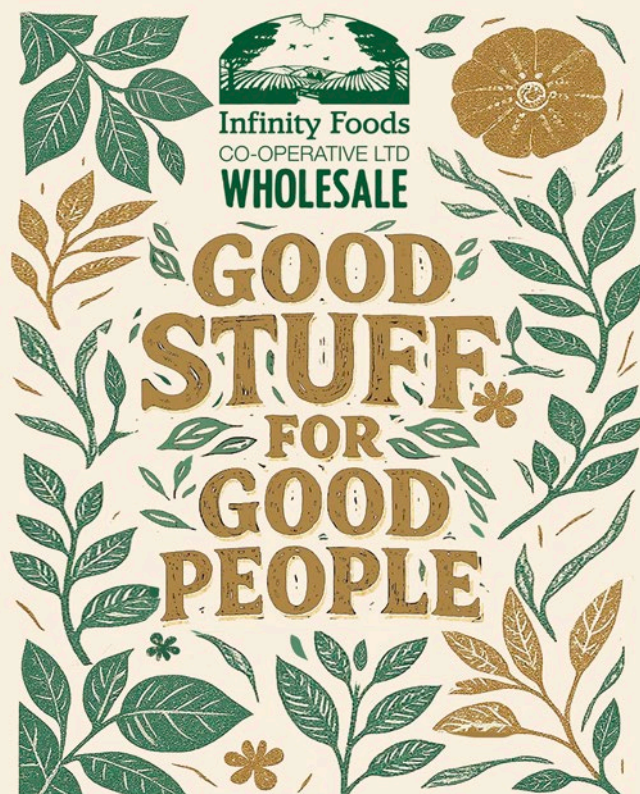
- Wildflower turf with native wild orchid seed - nationwide delivery
- Native wildflower seed mixes containing wild orchids
- Yellow Rattle seed and plugs
- Wildflower plants, plugs and bulbs
- Wildflower meadows created for you
- Consultancy service
- Based in East Sussex



Scan to
view the website

Tel: 01435 810446

www.wildflowerlawnsandmeadows.com



Workers' co-op supplying
the best organic and ethically
sourced wholefoods since 1971.



Wild Gardening

Naturalistic landscape
& garden designs



Creating beautiful gardens
for people and wildlife in
Sussex and Surrey

07713 758039
info@wildgardening.co.uk
www.wildgardening.co.uk



Investing in nature

We love working with businesses that share our passion for protecting nature. By combining our conservation knowledge with the expertise of our corporate partners, we create meaningful partnerships that make a real difference. Here are some of the organisations we're currently working with.



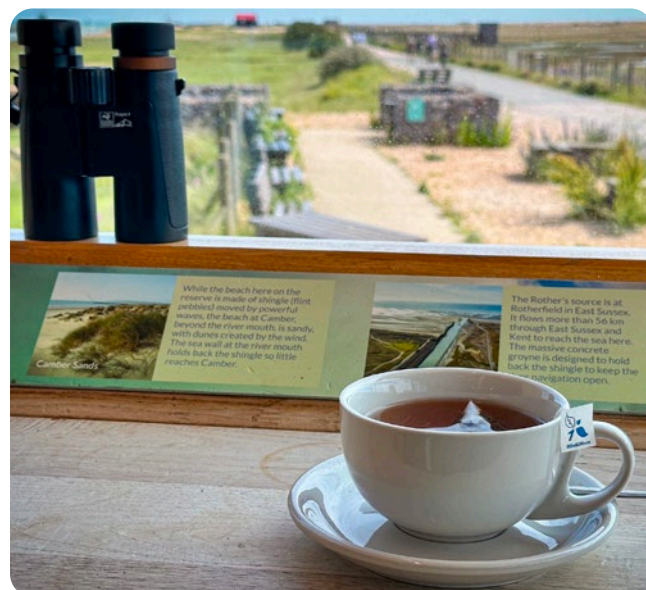
Lucy Townsend (she/her)
Corporate Partnerships Lead

To find out more about becoming a business partner please contact
lucytownsend@sussexwt.org.uk

Bird & Blend Tea Co

Staff and volunteers at Rye Harbour Discovery Centre enjoyed a mixology workshop hosted by Bird & Blend Tea Co. The Brighton-based company selected Sussex Wildlife Trust as its ChariTEA of the quarter, donating the profits from every pack of Sussex Sea Swim tea sold online to support our work.

The mixology workshop was a perfect way to celebrate the partnership, and RHDC staff spent a great afternoon learning about the history of different tea varieties, as well as putting their own creativity to the test. Guided by the Bird & Blend team, they blended their own unique teas to take home and enjoy.



Bird & Blend tea RHDC © Gesine Garz



Sussex Ponds & Gardens

For all ponds,
terraces and
associated
landscaping

Portfolio available
Personal and
efficient service



Telephone: Stephan Hurst
01825 872180 / 07748 248601
www.sussexpondsandgardens.co.uk

ORGANIC BIO-LIVE YOGURT
FROM GRASS ROOTS
GRAZING ON SWT PEVENSEY
LEVELS RESERVE

For more info see
www.courtldorgeorganics.co.uk

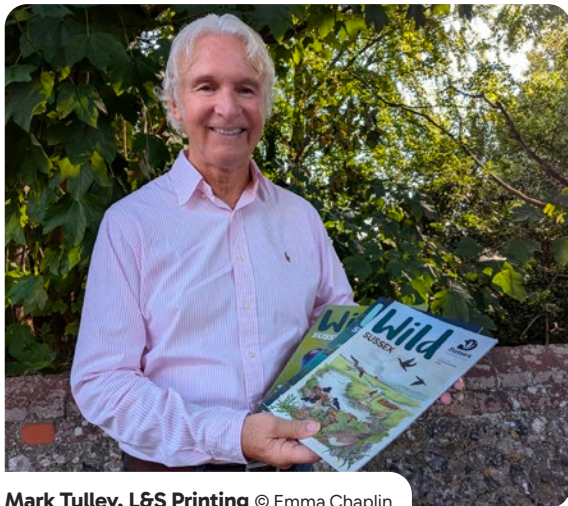


L&S Printing

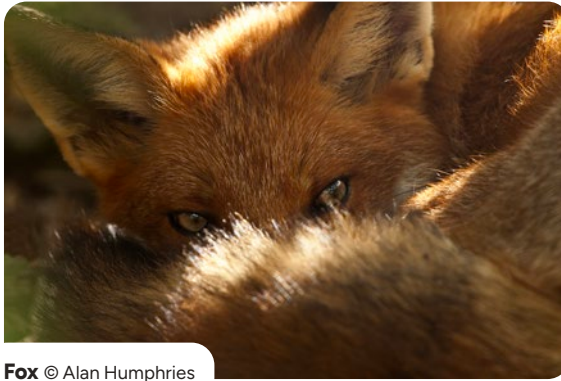
As a Director at L&S Printing, Mark Tulley has been a long-term supporter of Sussex Wildlife Trust, and he's responsible for the printing of this magazine. Brighton born and bred, he says there's no better place than Sussex.

Why is being a business member important to you?

Sussex Wildlife Trust fits perfectly with our business ethos of providing print across a wide range of offerings, that are ethically produced. We are a Carbon Neutral company, and we look to support and partner with organisations that share our commitment and values.



Mark Tulley, L&S Printing © Emma Chaplin



Fox © Alan Humphries

Who else do you print for?

So many! BAFTA, Brighton Dome and Festival, Royal Pavilion and Museums, Sotheby's, Brewers, Maggie's Cancer Centres and the Artist's Open Houses, to name but a few.

What's your favourite view in Sussex?

Devil's Dyke takes some beating for sure, also the East Dean coast road into Seven Sisters. And Cuckmere Haven is breathtaking.

I'd also give a nod to the seventeenth tee at Hollingbury Golf Course, if I'm playing well of course.

Any local wildlife tips?

I have a family of Foxes that live in a tree at the end of my garden. Treat them nicely and they will bring joy throughout the year.



L&S PRINTING

Midnight PR

As well as being Gold business members, staff at Midnight PR support the Trust through pro bono public relations work. "As a proud B Corp, supporting organisations that make a positive difference in our community is something that means a lot to us," says Alex Hankinson, Joint Managing Director at Midnight.

"It's a pleasure to use our PR expertise to support a charity that's protecting the places and wildlife that make Sussex so special."

The Midnight office is a five-minute walk from Hove seafront and staff are encouraged to take walking meetings and spend time outside each day.



© Midnight PR

Thank you to all our business members for your continued support

Brighton and Hove Psychotherapy ● Canine Cottages ● Classic Cottages ● Close Brothers ● Commercial Kitchen Engineers
Court Lodge Organics ● CSL Behring ● EcoOctopus ● Eshcon Ltd ● Focus SB ● Folkingtons ● Food Show
GOAT Digital ● Groundsure ● Harvey Maria ● Hellingly Parish Council ● HolidayCottages.co.uk ● Infinity Foods ● Jin Designs
L&S Printing ● Lucky Baby Star ● Midnight PR ● Organic Gardens Sussex ● Portsmouth Water ● Rye Harbour Holiday Park
Sensara ● The Secret Campsite ● Trident ● UK Power Networks ● Wienerberger Ltd ● Wild Nutrition ● Wildhaven

Diving into Sussex kelp's underwater recovery



ARMS collection © SWT

This summer, I swapped my desk for a day at sea and joined researchers and divers from the Sussex Kelp Recovery Project (SKRP) on a mission.

Our target? Twenty-four ARMS (Autonomous Reef Monitoring Structure) units that had been sitting on the seabed for a year. These structures act like underwater blocks of flats, attracting all sorts of tiny marine creatures, often too small or elusive to be spotted during traditional surveys.

Setting off from Brighton Marina, our crew headed west along the Sussex coast to retrieve them. What sounded straightforward quickly proved otherwise. With limited visibility underwater, the divers had to carefully locate each unit, release it from its anchor and place it into protective containers on the seabed. Lift bags were then inflated to gently float them to the surface. As each unit bobbed alongside the boat, the deck team hauled it aboard, logged it and stored it in seawater for the journey home.

We returned feeling windswept but pleased with ourselves. The units were sealed and transported to Imperial College London, where scientists “process” the panels, to then identify marine life living on and within. Every species found helps build a clearer picture of how Sussex’s marine environment is recovering.

What strikes me most was how many different aspects of science come together to tell this recovery story. Underwater video surveys have revealed encouraging increases in fish such as Atlantic Mackerel, Sand Eels, Mullet and Black Sea Bream. Divers have discovered extensive mussel beds, some stretching over a kilometre, as well as the return of sea bream nests.

Then there’s environmental DNA (eDNA). Incredibly, by analysing tiny traces of genetic material left behind in seawater, scientists can detect species that have passed through an area without ever seeing them.

By tracking change over time, scientific monitoring and research demonstrate the seabed’s incredible capacity for recovery – and the obstacles it may face – giving us hope and the knowledge needed to support its return to health.

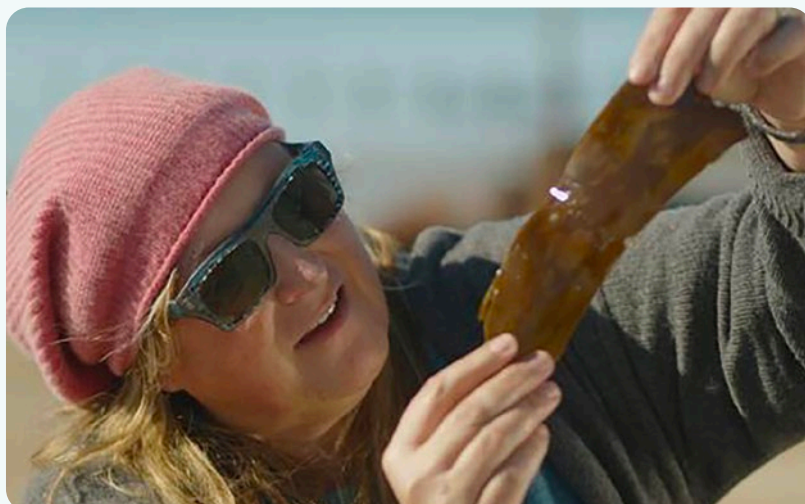


Nikki Oliver
Sussex Kelp
Recovery Project
Support Officer
(she/her)



**Sussex Kelp
Recovery
Project**

For more details about the
research & researchers
involved in SKRP, visit the
Sussex Kelp Recovery Project



Dr Marianne Glascott, conducting research on kelp mobility and ecotoxicology
© Marianne Glascott

News from Rye Harbour Nature Reserve



Bobbie Lane
Communications Officer
– Rye Harbour Discovery
Centre (she/her)

Festive Makers Market



Festive Makers Market © Martin Bruce

Our popular Festive Makers Market (free entry), on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 November, will offer unique, hand-crafted items on a nature-inspired theme from talented local makers. Pop in for beautiful homeware, ceramics, jewellery, artwork, prints, greetings cards, gorgeous knits, naturally dyed clothing and...chocolate!

See: rye.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/whatson

Gifts that give

From our Festive Makers Market, with lots of wonderful high-quality handmade items, to our Opticron Binocular and Optics Demo Day on 28 November, or the curated selection of sustainable gifts at the Discovery Centre shop – we're sure you'll find the perfect gift. The best part is that profits go straight back to support the work of Sussex Wildlife Trust.

We're thrilled that Cy Baker, David Shepherd's Wildlife Artist of the Year 2022, has been collaborating with us throughout 2026. If you're looking for something really special, Cy has created original artwork, inspired by his visits to Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. Prints include: Coots and a Little Grebe facing off, spotted from the Denny Hide, Sea Kale and Curlew. Check out cybaker.co.uk/pc/rye-harbour/

A selection of original artworks will be available to buy at a fundraising auction on 3 December. This is an invite-only event. Please register your interest by emailing RHDCOffice@sussexwt.org.uk if you'd like the chance to buy a stunning piece of artwork by an award-winning artist, while helping to raise funds for Sussex Wildlife Trust.



Artwork created by Cy Baker



Celebrating five years of the Discovery Centre

We celebrated five years since the Discovery Centre opened its doors on 24 May 2021. The wonderful centre was made possible thanks to tireless support from the local community, led by the Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, plus a generous donation from the Layton family and so many others.

Our Discover Rye Harbour project, made possible thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players, helped us connect and engage visitors with the rare and special wildlife at the reserve through events, school excursions and adult education.

We aimed to transform people's experience of the wildlife, unique habitats and wider heritage of this special nature reserve by creating a fantastic and accessible centre for all to enjoy. Five years on, and we've achieved more than we could have imagined. We expect to have welcomed more than one million visitors by the end of 2026 and created thousands of special wildlife memories.

RHDC © Rebecca Brooker



What you might see

By November, we often welcome hundreds of Curlew roosting in the saltmarsh. If the weather conditions are right in December, hundreds, or sometimes, thousands of Lapwing and Golden Plover head to Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. Top tip – if they're in the sky, that might mean there's a bird of prey nearby.



Curlew © Dennis Hunt

Other news

Beaver news



Fran Southgate
Sussex Beaver Lead

In rare cases we can celebrate the reversal of an extinction. We are privileged to be part of the beginnings of the recovery of Beavers in Sussex, after an absence of centuries. There's so much that we don't know. What will be their main migration routes? What are their preferred territories? And how will these amazing ecosystem engineers impact our nature-depleted landscapes? More information on progress of this exciting work in the next magazine.



Beaver © Matt Phelps

Nofence collars

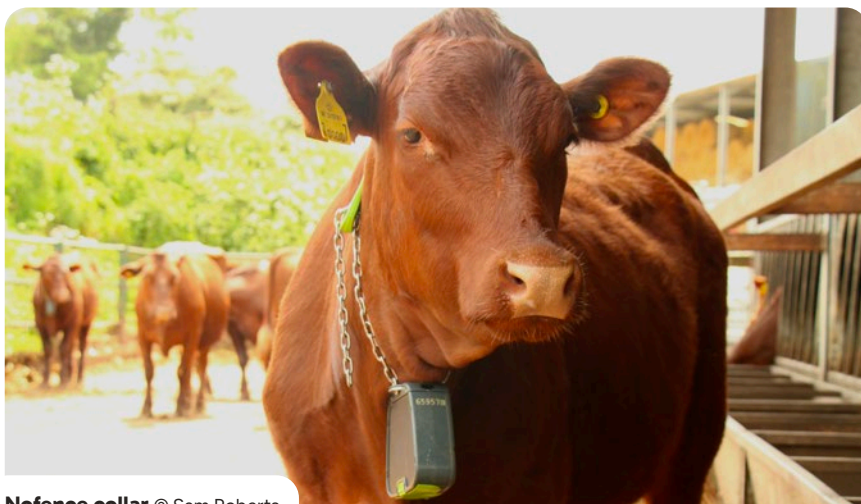
We were delighted to be awarded funding by Friends of the South Downs to support the use of innovative Nofence collar technology on grazing cattle in wood pasture at our Ebernoe Wildlands reserve.

This technology consists of solar-powered GPS collars worn by the cattle and a virtual boundary, reducing the need for physical fencing. Together, this allows targeted grazing on specific parts of the nature reserve, where it's needed most, and the ability to put in exclusion zones if there are sensitive species.

The technology gives us remote information about the cattle. Their welfare is still checked regularly by volunteer lookers and staff. A huge thank you to the Friends for enabling this to happen.



Ryan Allison
Area Manager –
West (he/him)



Nofence collar © Sam Roberts

Ghost ponds

Arden Follington interned with the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre this year. His main project was digitising ponds from 1840s Sussex tithe maps using GIS. He also visited “ghost ponds” with the South Downs National Park Authority. These are historic ponds that have been filled in and forgotten. The pond dataset he created can help target future restoration sites and offer insights into Beaver habitat preferences for reintroductions. This internship was funded by the University of Sussex.



© Arden Follington

Young fundraiser

Twelve-year-old naturalist Benji Fallow is a Trust member who has been drawing animals and nature since he was three. His family sell cards and prints of his artwork on Etsy, with all proceeds going to charity. Benji has also undertaken several other amazing fundraising challenges, raising over £1,000 for Sussex Wildlife Trust. Thank you Benji.

Find him [@benjaminfallow](#) on Etsy and Instagram



Benji Fallow with artwork © Nish Fossey

David Harvey

We were sad to hear from his family that inspirational naturalist and ecologist David Harvey has died. His knowledge of Sussex wildlife was superb and he spent much of his working life preserving and protecting it in various roles. He loved the sea and one of his many achievements was to launch Sussex Seasearch, which maps the rich marine wildlife off our coast. David was an amazing diver and underwater photographer. We are grateful for all he did to support Sussex wildlife and the Trust.

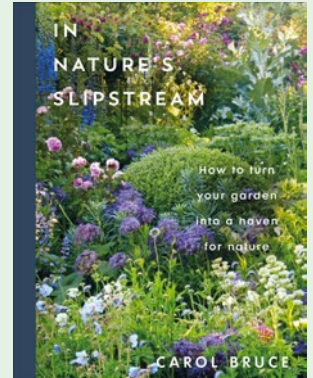


David Harvey diving

BOOK REVIEWS

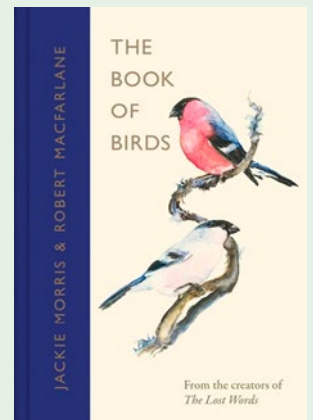
In Nature's Slipstream, by Carol Bruce

This is a thoughtful and uplifting exploration of the quiet connections between people and the natural world. Through vivid descriptions and reflective storytelling, the author invites us to slow down and notice the subtle rhythms of nature that often pass unnoticed in everyday life. *In Nature's Slipstream* ultimately leaves you feeling refreshed, inspired, and more attentive to the beauty of the natural world around us every day, everywhere quietly. Heather Salisbury



The Book of Birds, by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris

Part field guide, part illustrated poetry anthology, *The Book of Birds* is a unique ode to our fast-declining bird species. Although a thing of beauty, *The Book of Birds* is less 'coffee table' and more 'take your coffee outside'. Look up, listen, and discover what there could be more of if we act now. Macfarlane and Morris say it best – truly, "this is a book of hope". Kerry Williams



Grandpa and the Kingfisher, by Anna Wilson and Sarah Massini

A beautiful picture book for young children, which looks at life through the eyes of a grandfather and grandson observing a pair of Kingfishers and their offspring. "A positive story about life, death and being part of the natural world". Illustrator Sarah Massini is a regular visitor to Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, and as a consequence, the book is dedicated to "the staff and volunteers" there. You can buy it in the Discovery Centre shop.



A bundle of winter Wrens



Kerry Williams (she/her)
Communications
Officer – Conservation

Someone once told me if you think you've seen a mouse it's probably a Wren. These diminutive brown birds hop about the undergrowth in mouse-like stop-motion fashion, inconspicuous, despite being the UK's most numerous breeding bird.

The similarity promptly ends when they open their mouth. Though weighing under 10g, the Wren's voice is bold, a long, high-pitched whistle and trill, cutting through crisp morning air and reaching above that of larger songsters.

Woodland understorey is an ideal nesting habitat for Wrens, and males establish clear territories in early spring, using that powerful voice. They build five or six nests to try and attract a female and will aggressively deter other males that dare approach.

When the chill of winter comes around, however, the male changes his tune. A balmy summer of successful shouting may have shown that a tiny body is no barrier to being heard, but it won't help with heat loss on cold nights.

So, the male starts collecting bedfellows. Flitting out on short trips, he again utilises his song, letting females and other males know they are welcome to join him for a platonic sleepover.

They gratefully accept, bundling into moss and leaf-lined woven grass, squidding tiny wings and bellies together to make room for just one more. Beaks in, bums out. Most consist of small gatherings, but records of dozens have been logged, and one count in the 1960s numbered 61 Wrens.

The warmth-sharing of these communal roosts might be lifesaving. Although as anyone who shares a bed will know, there can be a waste of energy caused by the wriggling of others. Shuffling for space, preening, defecating in the roost: entirely unacceptable sleepover etiquette.

When warmer days return it's back to spring rules, and the male begins to banish other males from the roost, cosy winter cuddles forgotten until the cold starts to nip around tiny feet once more.

Next time you hear a winter Wren having a good yell, be sympathetic. It's survived the night, thank goodness, but it's had a terrible night's sleep.

