

HEATHLANDS NEWS



HELPING YOUR HEATHS

**Funding raised by
The National Lottery**
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund



Please send your comments and questions to us at heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk

70 FOOTBALL PITCHES OF HEATH CONSERVED

As the project enters its third year, we take a look back at what we have achieved in year two.

Throughout last winter from September 2017-March 2018 partners continued with their practical management works funded by the project. Works are funded on 34 heathland sites across the project area. The project partners have completed work to restore, recreate and reconnect heathland.

In year two a total of 70 football pitches (50ha) of heathland has been conserved broken down into the following works:

- 14 football pitches worth of scrub cleared
- Just under 10 football pitches of non-native invasive species removed
- Just under 33 football pitches of bracken treated
- 14 football pitches worth of linking habitat created.

The projects engagement activities saw a focus on one of our main interpretation projects which involved commissioning an artist to work



Picture 1 Ambersham Common, ©Emma Stanbury

with evidence gathered by volunteers and local communities to develop seven site 'pieces'. The pieces hope to portray the stories of seven heaths, which will also link to one another to join the heathlands up in people's minds. Graeme Mitcheson was appointed at the

beginning of 2018 and we are excited to see this project develop over the coming year, the first of its kind for the National Park.

During the project's second summer we also saw the launch of the Heathland focused 'Take the Lead' campaign which successfully reached just under half a million people. Our responsible dog ownership engagement activities have developed through the creation of our 'countryside ability' course and the recruitment of new dog ambassadors in the project area.

Our volunteer network continues to grow and we are beginning the recruitment of new volunteer streams including 'Heathland Hosts' and 'Health Walk Leaders' has now begun.

GRAZING IS AMAZING

Grazing was traditionally carried out by commoners exercising their grazing rights, however this tradition died out during the last century.



Picture 2 Belted Galloways - ©Rob Groves National Trust

Low intensity grazing by livestock (usually cattle) is considered by many heathland managers as a sustainable (and traditional) way of managing heathland vegetation. It is the most effective way of managing humid and wet heath, where purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) can become dominant.

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Today, many sites are bordered or dissected by roads, so a perimeter fence is required to contain the animals. The Heathlands Reunited project committed to support partners' grazing projects by helping to fund fencing and infrastructure including the purchase of traditional breeds of cattle (belted Galloway or british whites). These rare breeds of cattle are hardy animals and are adapted to living outdoors all year round, with little or no supplementary feeding, unlike the more commercial breeds.

Conservation grazing is already established on a number of heathland sites and partners are developing considerable knowledge and experience in the effective methods of conservation grazing. The partnership continue to research ways of improving sustainability together. The Lynchmere Society have a model which integrates public sponsorship through the establishment of a Community Interest Company (CIC).

Aptly named the Cow Club - The Lynchmere Community Grazing scheme already has a membership of 20, which is a fantastic and encouraging start.

It was agreed that a programme to build the herd should begin and the process started by borrowing a handsome and gentle belted Galloway bull named Maverick from National Trust Woolbeding. The result of his efforts were very satisfactory and the herd now have four very happy and healthy cows in calf.

The cows have been doing a great job controlling the scrub on the Commons, although the lateness of spring has meant they have been getting quite hungry and have needed feeding at times.

As spring unfolds they will be feasting on young gorse, birch, pine, holly and tufty grasses.

The CIC are seeking more members and support, and have just sent out their first

newsletter with more details and information about the herd. Members will not only have access to any beef produced, but will also be invited to the AGM and kept regularly up to speed with all things cow-related. For more information visit:

<https://lynchmeregrazing.com/>

Or email: info@lynchmeregrazing.com

The Heathlands Reunited project have supported this initiative with the purchase of 15 belted Galloways. The project aims to support the establishment 300ha of grazing over three project sites and provide a lasting legacy to by bringing together partners to share experience.

Without grazing, the heathlands of the National Park would quickly cease to exist. They exist because they have been grazed over many centuries. It's a sustainable way to care for precious and rare habitats that are home to the rare plants and animals that love our heaths - like nightjars, sand lizards and sundew. Our partners who manage heathlands in the National Park are very aware that the cows will be grazing in public spaces and selectively chose and bred them for their calm temperaments. The project is running educational sessions such as our 'Meet the cattle' events to help people feel safe and understand how to share these spaces, particularly people who are nervous around cattle. See our events pages at the end of the newsletter to find out more.

RECOVERY OF IPING COMMON

Recent surveys already carried out after Iping Common fire.

The Sussex Wildlife Trust manage 32 nature reserves across Sussex, including Iping and Stedham Commons, near Midhurst in West Sussex. Iping Common is one of the best examples of lowland heath in Sussex and home

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY to many rare and specialised heathland species (2,843 at the last count!)

On 28 February a fire broke out across the north-western section of Iping Common caused by a spark from a bonfire. Despite the efforts of staff and volunteers using fire beaters, the spread was not contained by the beaters or the internal fire breaks that were in place. The fire brigade attended and thanks to their prompt response the fire was extinguished.

The Sussex Wildlife Trust decided to react quickly and repeat an invertebrate survey carried out in 2012. Fortunately, around half of the area covered fell in the burnt area and half didn't, allowing for a stratified and direct comparison between burnt and unburnt, as well as between 2012 and 2018, without losing



Picture 3 Burnt area at Iping taken in mid-April – 6 weeks after the fire

any scientific robustness. This will be achieved by collating the 2018 data in two different permutations. Although only two visits of the planned six have been completed so far, some interesting observations have already been made.

After the first visit, there were more invertebrate species in the burnt area than there were in the unburnt area. Quite unexpected but, in part due to the method of survey on this visit. We were predominantly using the suction sampler. What was striking

was that there were hundreds of common heath moths flying around the burnt area as compared to the unburnt areas where there were typically one or two seen at any one time. This species mainly (but not exclusively) feeds on heather.

By the second visit, the balance had shifted slightly. Currently on the unburnt area, 107 species (of the 158 recorded so far) have been recorded with 11.2% having conservation status.

On the burnt area there were 97 species but with a higher proportion of species having conservation status (12.4%). Basically the same number of species with conservation status were recorded across the two treatments. At this stage, little should be read into this. Comparing the plots between 2012 and 2018 should be the main result from this survey and this cannot be achieved until all relevant visits have been completed. However, the results are extremely encouraging.

At least three species have been recorded new to the site (and this is a well recorded site for its invertebrates). Two of these were found in the burnt area. *Andrena bucephala* (a nationally scarce mining bee) and *Diaperis boleti* (a nationally scarce darkling beetle that eats fungus).

Further to this, rare species already known from the site were recorded in the burnt areas (but NOT in the unburnt areas). This includes *Nomada lathburiana* (a cuckoo of *Andrena cineraria* – RedList), *Trypocopris pyraneus* (a nationally scarce dor beetle) and the heath short-spur *Anisodactylus nemorivagus* (Nationally Rare, IUCN – near threatened and BAP).

The Sussex Wildlife Trust wish to publicly commend the efforts of the fire service and thank them for their assistance. Sussex Wildlife Trust would also like to apologise for any distress or concern caused to members of the local community and visitors to the reserve,

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some of whom have let us know how upset they are by the drastic change of scenery.

We will be working with our partners in the Heathland Reunited Project and the fire service to share learning from the incident and future fire prevention training and projects.

Burning is an ancient practice for managing heaths and is still used today. It allows heather to rejuvenate to the benefit of the wide variety of plants and animals that inhabit heathland.

There will be an opportunity for those people who have expressed concern about the reserve and the wider public, to meet our staff at a drop-in day on 21 June at Iping Common car park. Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve Managers and our Senior Ecologist will be available to talk to visitors and answer any questions they may have.

JOHN MUIR AWARD

Pupils at Bury CE Primary School spent four days discovering, exploring, conserving and sharing their experiences of heathland in the South Downs National Park during the Spring Term.

Two trips, funded by the Heathlands Reunited project, allowed pupils to explore two heathland sites near their school.

Discover: The journey started in January, in Bury Schools Forest School area behind the playground. Jonathan, SDNPA Education Officer, spent the afternoon with KS2 learning about John Muir, a Scottish born adventurer and explorer, who immigrated to America in 1849, aged 11. Muir spent his lifetime experiencing wildness, tying himself to the tops of trees during storms and wandering for thousands of miles with only the basics on his back. His love for wild places led to his campaigning for their protection in later life and ultimately to the formation of National Parks.

Explore: The classes' first trip to Graffham Common was truly in the spirit of John Muir,

with no toilet blocks, classrooms or wet weather cover in sight. Led by staff from the Sussex Wildlife Trust, they walked around the common in the morning and learned about the species that grow on heathland, common rights, burial mounds, rituals, and more! In the afternoon, they learned how heathland habitat is disappearing and the conservation techniques we employ to keep this habitat open.

Conserve: These new skills were quickly put into practice as the children popped pines and lopped birch, building an impressive fire that helped warm up some hot chocolate.



Picture 4 Pupils from Bury school scrub bashing

More exploring: The second trip to Wiggonholt Common, with RSPB Pulborough Brooks, involved a day of activities to explore the habitat in more detail. Pupils, now familiar with the most common plant species (heathers, gorse, Scot's pine and birch), hunted for invertebrates and constructed heathland food chains. They saw cattle grazing and learned about ground nesting birds.

Share: Back at school, the children went into the Forest School area to compare the similarities and differences between the two habitats. They created posters and displays in

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY school to inform visitors about the importance of looking after heathland habitat. The local community were invited to an exhibition in May, showcasing all their hard work, including some beetle prints that were inspired by the invertebrates discovered on the commons.



Picture 5 Pupils showcasing their artwork

The prints are available to purchase from Bury Primary, contact office@bury.school We also have two on display at the South Downs visitors centre in Midhurst.

Celebrate: All the pupils and staff were presented with their John Muir Discovery Award Certificates at the exhibition in May.

The head teacher, Thomas Moore, said:
"The John Muir Award provided an excellent and flexible framework for our KS2 work this term. We firmly believe that connecting children with their local environment and community creates inspiring and exciting learning, which has shown in the enthusiasm and outstanding work they have produced. The children and staff were thrilled to receive their certificates, we can't wait to do our next John Muir Award."

WATCH OUR HEATHLANDS MINI DOCUMENTARY

The partnerships education sub group came together last year to discuss what educational resources were lacking in their current tool kits that are used to lead educational sessions. Quite quickly it was recognised that the partnership were lacking in video resource.

We decided to commission a mini natural history documentary. Partners worked together to find all the right spots and species for a commissioned film crew to begin recording. They put together an amazing showcase of our local heathlands. The 10minute mini documentary will be used to inspire and tell the stories of our local heaths.

A series of shorter species clips were also drawn from this video which can be used to supplement educational sessions.

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We launched the mini heathlands documentary across the Easter weekend in April. The documentary was made by BigWave TV in collaborations with your site rangers and species experts.



The clips and film together achieved 2,703 engagements (likes, shares comments and retweets) on Facebook and Twitter with total opportunities to view of 90,389. The clips placed on Instagram have been watched 3007 times.

You can watch the video on YouTube by following this link:

<https://youtu.be/PgmbhY8Y2fY>

Or simply typing SDNPA Heathlands video into google.

HORRIBLE HISTORY HELPERS WANTED

SAVE THE DATE 25 JUNE 2018



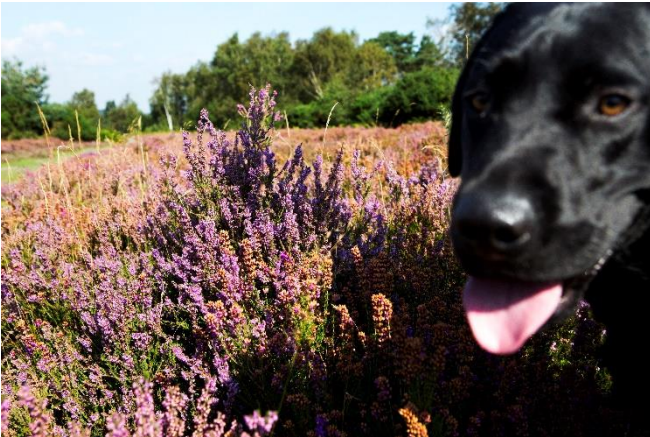
Do you like: Storytelling, Heritage Stories, Writing, Creative art.

We're creating a heathlands history book for children and we need volunteers to help us. Come along to our introductory session to find out more about how you can contribute.

Call 01730 819276 or email heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk to book your space

TAKE THE LEAD

Welcome to our new dog ambassadors.



Picture 6 Dog on heathland.

We are excited to announce that we currently have 4 new dog ambassadors who have adopted local sites in their area to help us celebrate and facilitate responsible dog ownership. If you see them on your local heath they'd love to talk to you, so do introduce yourself and say hello.

- 1.) Sam Walsh – Dog Ambassador for Longmoor with Hampshire and Isle Wight Wildlife Trust
- 2.) John Oliver- Dog Ambassadors for Pulborough Brooks with the RSPB
- 3.) Beryl Bishop – Dog Ambassador for Black Down with the National Trust
- 4.) Andy Jones – Dog Ambassador for Ludshott Common with the National Trust



Sam Stanley and Mylo- Woolmer Forest

Hello I'm Sam,

My interests include crossfit, running, cycling, gardening & photography. I have loved the great outdoors & nature since I was a child. Recently I ditched the desk job and I am studying horticulture with a view to a new career in gardening. I hope to bump into some of you soon.



John and Bertie - Wiggonholt

Hello my name is John and I'm the Volunteer Team Manager at RSPB Pulborough Brooks.

We have over 185 volunteers doing over 40 roles in and around the Visitors Centre and out on the reserve and it's so rewarding to be working with so many likeminded people.

At Pulborough Brooks you may know that we have been developing our heathland on Wiggonholt Common to return it to its natural heathland state and as part of this I have a very keen interest in ensuring that we have the support of the many dog owners who bring their dogs on to this part of the reserve.

Being a Dog Ambassador under the umbrella of the Heathlands Reunited project is the start of this opportunity of making real in roads into hopefully working with and, where necessary, educating our dog owners. Walking the trail

with a dog is a great way of breaking the ice when talking to dog owners.

Unfortunately I do not own a dog but have recruited our first dog volunteer – he has the skills and experience to do the job and his name is Bertie who is a lovely Cavapoo!

Progress so far has been to map out a set route to follow which I have now done and I'm now checking different times of day to see which period would be the best to gather information.

The next step will be to carry out some surveys leading into talking to our dog owners through the use of questionnaires.



Beryl Bishop- Black Down

Hello I'm Beryl, an ex-teacher who has lived around here since 1988. I was a prime mover in setting up Haslemere Tennis Club. I have seen lots of changes, but the worst is the amount of dog poo on the paths!



Andy and Bunty- Ludshott Common and Bramshott Chase

Hello I'm Andy,

I have lived in Haslemere for over 30 years and am now retired. I have always been a keen walker, enjoying the glorious and varied countryside we are so lucky to have on our doorstep. So, when I gave up work, it seemed only right to get a dog to keep me company. Bunty is a rescue collie, hailing originally from Tralee in Southern Ireland. She is also an accredited therapy dog and we visit two schools every week. One is a primary school where she "listens" to pupils read to her. These are children who are struggling with their reading and lacking in confidence and it is now well proven that a non-judgemental dog (and its owner!) can help them progress and catch up. The other school we visit is one for youngsters with Special Emotional and Mental Health needs that is in Waterloo. Just relaxing with man's best friend, throwing balls and going for a walk has a huge positive impact for those who have had a very challenging start to their lives.

We're asking responsible owners to help us encourage the few that are 'giving dogs a bad

FREE EVENTS

Through **Heathlands Reunited** we have several **FREE** events for you to get involved with, including family events like **Secrets of The Heath** and events for dogs such as **Hairy not scary!** **Meet The Cattle walks**



Picture 7 Children at an event

Meet The Cattle, Hairy not scary!

When: 30 June

Where: Woolbeding, GU29 0QB

Join the National Trust who would like to introduce you to their cattle. They are welcoming everyone, including dogs to find out just what role these magnificent creatures play in helping the heaths.

Natalie Light our dog behaviourist will be on hand to help with doggie introductions and show you how best to 'moo-neuvre' through a field of cows. Each slot is only one hour long so it can easily replace your normal dog walk for that day. Join us at 10am or 11am

Reptile Ramble (Adults Only)

When: 7 July

Where: RSPB Pulborough Brooks, RH20 2EL
ADVANCED BOOKING ESSENCIAL.

Please email us at pulborough.brooks@rspb.org.uk or telephone 01798 875851 between 10 am and 4 pm.

A short walk that will take visitors 'off trail' to some of the best spots looking for the four species of reptile living on the heathland of

name' to step up and take the lead and this is how:

FOUR STEPS TO TAKE THE LEAD

Keep dogs on a lead near livestock. Free-roaming dogs can harm and kill livestock and wildlife – or stray into dangerous territory.

1. Scoop the poop. Dog poo contains worms and diseases that can harm wildlife, humans and the environment. **Bag it and bin it!**
2. Don't scare the birds. Ground-nesting-birds love our heathlands but curious dogs can scare birds, causing them to abandon their nests and their young. **Stick to the paths, especially from 1 March to 15 September.**
3. **Do not enter military danger areas when the red flags are flying.** Ministry of Defence (MOD) land is free to use at certain times, but when red flags are flying, find an alternative route.

Visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/takethelead for more information and to watch the canine confessions. For details on becoming a dog ambassador email heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk

Pulborough Brooks. We'll be looking at these creatures close up and finding out how their habitat is managed and how they live. At the end of the walk you'll meet the team from the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust so you'll be able to see (and even hold) the full range of British species living on the heath.

Superhero Safari

When: 7 July

**Where: RSPB Pulborough Brooks, RH20 2EL
ADVANCED BOOKING ESSENTIAL.**

Please email us at pulborough.brooks@rspb.org.uk or telephone 01798 875851 between 10 am and 4 pm.

There are some remarkable creatures living on the heathland and on this family event we'll be getting up close and personal with some of these amazing creatures, and discover their superpowers.

And after the safari you'll have a chance to meet and even hold some of these very special amphibians and reptiles.

BioBlitz on the Heath

When: 31 July 2018 (10.00-16.00)

**Where: Lynchmere Common (Haslemere near Liphook) Nearest Postcode: GU27 3QZ
BOOKING REQUIRED**

Join us for a free day of discovery on Lynchmere Common ('Linchmere' if you are looking on an OS map).

Toilets will be onsite on the day but please bring your own refreshments. Put together a picnic and stay all day to learn about the creatures that live on the heath. Alternatively you can join us for your favourite species slot. A face painter will also be on site to decorate you as your favourite species of the day.

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See the timetable below, please let us know which walks you will be joining by emailing heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk

09.00: Birds – Lead by John Richardson and Kate (Local bird enthusiast and SDNPA Ranger)

10.00: Reptiles and Amphibians – Lead by Paul Stevens and Matt Bramich (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust Volunteer & National Trust Ranger)

11.00: Butterflies – Lead by Margret Hibbard & Charlotte Wray (Local Enthusiast and SDNPA Ranger)

13.00: Mini Beasts – Lead by Jasmine Owen and Chloe Goddard (SDNPA Rangers)

14.00: Plants/Trees – Lead by Sarah Fiske and Dave Elliott (National Trust Rangers)

This event is suitable for complete countryside beginners! Dogs on a lead welcome.

Bringing Heathland Home

When: 4 September

Where: Liss Forest/Woolmer

Join the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust and learn about why we cut out large patches of the heather and the importance of bare ground.

You will even be shown how to hand cut your own section of heather and everyone will be offered their own patch to take home. You can produce your own heather in your garden to help support the rare biodiversity that relies so heavily on this habitat. You'll also learn why this work is so important

Secrets of the Heath

When: 8 & 9 September

Where: Petersfield Heath

Secrets of the Heath is about sharing the

unknown history of South Downs heathland and what makes these rare and beautiful places so special.

Heaths are very rare habitats rich in wildlife and they're also a fantastic open space for families to explore. But many people don't realise that they're under threat and would disappear completely if they aren't actively managed. This event is a chance for people to come face-to-face with heathland characters from pre-historic to present times. Come and find out how people have lived and worked the heath over thousands of years and how you can play your part today.

Throughout the day there will be a programme of displays and re-enactments in the arena including:

- Roman soldiers
- Medieval warriors
- falconry

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- the highway woman

In addition there will be many stalls and demonstrations from making Stone Age flint tools and birch brooms to meeting the snakes and lizards that inhabit our heathland and the cows and sheep that graze it.

Other highlights will include a bat walk on Saturday evening, have a go archery and even the family dog can get involved, by trying our countryside dog ability course.

Hot snacks, served by the local scout group, will be available to buy along with local beer and ice cream.

Please email heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk or call 01730 819320 to book your place.

For our full list of events please visit:

www.southdowns.gov.uk/events and filter by **heathlands reunited**.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow the Heathlands Reunited project using the hash tag #HelpTheHeaths.

Follow the take the lead campaign using #TakeTheLead

Want to learn more about what happening in the wider National Park? Sign up to the South Downs National Park Newsletter at www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/