



# SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

## WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

Happy new year! This month we are:

- **Cheering up January with winning pictures** from our South Downs National Park photo competition
- Considering why **we can't afford to get bored of Brexit**
- **Asking for help to count stars** as a warm up for the second South Downs Dark Skies festival this February

Send your comments and ideas to us at [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## A GOLDEN HARVEST AND CURIOUS COWS

*An extraordinary composition capturing the shifting seasons from summer to autumn has won first place in the South Downs National Park photo competition 2017/18 – theme 'Growing Places'. The three winning and three highly commended photos are now open for you to vote for the 'people's choice' winner.*

The judges agreed that 'Harvest Home' by Ron De'Ath was technically perfect and clearly tells the story of farmers as stewards, caring for the National Park. Ron De'Ath, who took the picture from Butser Hill in Hampshire, wins £250 for his picture.

South Downs photo competition judge Steve Watkins, editor of Outdoor Photography magazine, said:

"Ron has subverted what could easily have been a conventional harvest shot – making the unusual choice to frame the picture vertically and leave out the sky entirely. The result is a wonderful winding journey



*"Ron has subverted what could easily have been a conventional harvest shot – making the unusual choice to frame the picture vertically and leave out the sky entirely."*

through chalk grassland, ploughed earth and woodland, past farm house and field margins and on to freshly harvested crops, leaving no doubt that people live and work in this landscape."

Ron De'Ath, competition winner, said:

"I've been taking photos for more than 40 years and Butser Hill, one of my favourite hunting grounds. I try to convey to the viewer my feelings at the time of clicking the shutter which in this case were the sheer privilege of being in a place of such beauty which feeds the soul as well as the body."

The competition judges were Steve Watkins, editor of Outdoor Photography magazine; local photographer and gallery owner Finn Hopson; Rachael Talibart, winner of the Sunday Times Magazine's Landscape Photographer of the Year in 2016; Nick Heasman, Countryside & Policy Manager for the South Downs National Park Authority and Doug Jones, South Downs National Park Authority Member.

A moody crowd of cattle won second place and £150 for Dominic Vacher in 'Staredown', captured on Tegdown Hill near Brighton. The judges were impressed by the bold, almost human, composition and high level of detail in the picture. Three of the cattle are Sussex red, a traditional local rare breed, which have been grazed in this part of the country since the Bronze Age.



*I love how Dominic has caught the light on their whiskers and uncompromising stares. A lot of time and thought has gone into this photo."*

New South Downs photo competition judge Rachael Talibart, said

"Meet the band! This is a strong picture which brings out the individual personalities of these curious young animals. I love how Dominic has caught the light on

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their whiskers and uncompromising stares. A lot of time and thought has gone into this photo."

Dominic Vacher said:

"During the summer I passed this large and inquisitive herd of cattle almost daily and they would regularly come over to investigate as I walked through their pasture. As time went on we got more confident with each other. On this occasion they greeted me at the stile, blocking my way, and when they saw my camera it was as if they all wanted to pose for me. No zoom lens required!"

A subtle and challenging image 'Rolling Down' won third place and £50 for Simon Verrall. The judges agreed that this beautiful not over-beautified shot, taken on Barlavington Down in West Sussex, tells an important story about how farmers manage the pressures on the land - with the South Downs' chalk showing clearly through the bare winter earth.



*"This simple, modern composition captures a complicated tale of farming here in the South Downs."*

Nick Heasman, competition judge and Countryside and Policy Manager for the South Downs National Park Authority, said:

"This simple, modern composition captures a complicated tale of farming here in the South Downs. At first glance this image might look stark but here the light soil is everything and the farmer is carefully cultivating the ground using a modern practice called 'conservation tillage'. Come spring, this field will certainly be a place that grows and hopefully home to rare farmland birds such as skylark."

Simon Verrall said:

"The South Downs is an ever-changing environment and I wish I had more time to photograph it! My photo isn't a classic postcard view but a snapshot of day-to-day farming life. It is a reminder that, for many, the National Park is a place of work."



Vote for your favourite!

The three winning shots now join three highly commended photos to go forward for the people's choice.

See the full gallery

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/photo-competition-1718-winning-shortlisted-pictures/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/photo-competition-1718-winning-shortlisted-pictures/)

Vote for your favourite

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/vote-favourite-photo/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/vote-favourite-photo/)

## WE'LL BE COUNTING STARS...

*Ahead of our second South Downs Dark Skies Festival this February we need your help to measure how our dark night skies are changing by counting the number of stars you can see in Orion.*

Words by 'Dark Skies' Dan Oakley

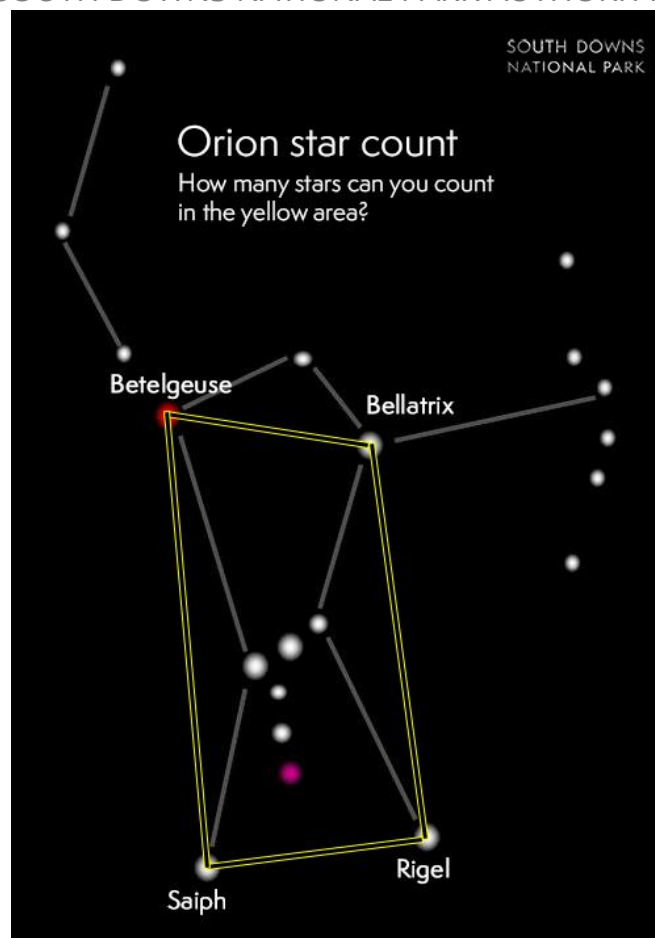
Looking up on a clear night can you see the Milky Way or the Andromeda galaxy? What you're able to spot with the naked eye will depend on the darkness of the sky above you. To prove that the South Downs' was worthy of International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) status we had to take more than 25,000 measurements of sky quality over three years.

But our work doesn't stop there. In order to protect our night skies we need to measure whether their quality is staying the same or changing over time – this is a big job so we really need your help.

It's very simple to get involved. Start by choosing a safe place to look at the stars and wrapping up warm – ideally you need to be away from direct lights like street lights or your phone for 20 minutes to make sure that your eyes are fully adjusted. Orion will rise from the South during the winter and one of the easiest ways to find him is to look for the row of three stars in his belt. Now imagine a wonky rectangle from his shoulders to his feet and count all the stars in this area – including the three bright stars in his belt.

How many did you find? If you were in the darkest skies in the world you might see 40. In towns and cities with lots of light pollution you should have spotted between 7 and 10. If you're further into the countryside you might see between 15 and 25. If you're in the very darkest parts of the South Downs National Park you'll see between 25 and 32.

Good luck and remember to #embracethedarkness!



Tell us how many stars you found and where you counted them at

[www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Orion-2018](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Orion-2018)

The South Downs Dark Skies Festival runs from 9 to 25 February 2018. Find out more at

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/dark-skies-festival-2018/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/dark-skies-festival-2018/)



## WE CAN'T AFFORD TO BE BORED OF BREXIT

*Love it or hate it there is no doubt that Brexit will continue to dominate the news in 2018. And whilst*

*it's completely acceptable for you to use the hills, moors and mountains to escape from the headlines, it's important to remember that the future of England's national parks depends on the outcome.*

Most of the landscapes in our national parks look the way they do because they have been farmed – from extensive grazing on moors, heaths and mountains to the more intensive arable farming familiar in the South Downs. The way that farmers own and manage the land is influenced by the subsidies that they receive from the EU through the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which, in turn, directly influences the delivery of national park purposes.

As well as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the majority of the laws and regulations that care for our environment come from the EU. Michael Gove's speech at the recent Oxford Farming Conference gave some indications of how the Government plans to reform these over the next few years (read the speech in full [www.gov.uk/government/news/farming-for-the-next-generation](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/farming-for-the-next-generation)).

National Parks England (NPE), the body who provide a collective voice for the views of the English\* National Park Authorities, has been working to identify how more environmental, and other, benefits could be achieved from the same money once we have left the EU.

NPE have outlined key points that will be of particular importance for National Parks through the Brexit process:

- The development of a new body of environmental law, regulation and guidance that is positive in its approach, guided by overarching principles and clearly and independently regulated.
- The combined effect of this new body of environmental law, the 25 Year Plan for the Environment and any future agriculture legislation should be greater than the sum of their parts: restoring, protecting and maintaining resilient ecosystems (and the habitats and species they support) and enhancing the landscapes that provide the many public benefits we enjoy and rely on.

These two points will be vital if we are to be that much promised 'first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it' and safeguard the future of the cultural heritage, landscapes and wildlife of our national parks.

Meanwhile here in the South Downs the National Park Authority is continuing work with local farmers and landowners to develop ideas for pilot schemes that could deliver much more for people and the

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environment than the current scheme of payments. With many of our farmers already working together for the environment in 'clusters' we believe that there is a better way to see these custodians of the countryside rewarded for delivering public goods such as clean water, homes for wildlife and better access. Watch this space.

\*National parks are devolved so Scottish and Welsh national parks are directed by their respective parliaments.

Find out more about National Parks England and their work [www.nationalparksengland.org.uk](http://www.nationalparksengland.org.uk)



## TEACHERS – ARE YOU USING US ENOUGH?

*A new term is underway and the Christmas holidays feel like a dream you woke up from too early, but don't panic. We have a Learning Zone packed full of locally-relevant resources ready for you to use across the entire curriculum. South Downs Education Officer Jonathan Dean shares five ways the National Park can inspire your class this spring and beyond.*

Words by Jonathan Dean

The South Downs National Park is an incredible, living-landscape and I'm lucky enough to see first-hand how it can capture children's imaginations. If you want to bring the National Park to life for your class here are some of my favourite tools – ready and waiting for you on our Learning Zone.

### 1. Where to get started?

The South Downs is a big place and the learning possibilities are near limitless. Deciding where to start isn't easy, which is why we've created the South Downs Curriculum Jigsaw, which puts National Curriculum topics in a South Downs context. Use it as a starting point to plan your topics for next term.

[learning.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/08/SD-Curriculum-jigsaws.pdf](https://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/08/SD-Curriculum-jigsaws.pdf)

## 2. Where to take your class?

You've used the curriculum to plan your topic but now you need a trip that will bring it all to life. Use the Learning Map to search for education providers – filtering your results by postcode, age group and curriculum area. All the contact details are there to make it simple and easy for you to plan your class' next adventure.

[learning.southdowns.gov.uk/learning-map/](https://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/learning-map/)

## 3. The National Park at night

When the sun goes down in the South Downs a whole host of animals come out to play, including budding astronomers. Find some of the best spots for stargazing and learn about why the National Park decided to also become one of only 11 International Dark Sky Reserves. The Dark Night Skies resources toolbox has activities and ideas to learn more about constellations and light pollution.

[learning.southdowns.gov.uk/wildlife-habitats/dark-night-skies/](https://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/wildlife-habitats/dark-night-skies/)

## 4. The John Muir Award

What better way to really learn about National Parks than to follow in the footsteps of John Muir, often

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described as the 'founding father' of National Parks. Lead your class on a journey of discovery, exploration, conservation and sharing as they achieve this national environmental award. It's free, easy to use and everyone that completes the award gets their own certificate.

## 5. All the other resources

Yes, this is cheating but we have hundreds of activities, worksheets, case studies and more available for you. Use our Resource Finder to search by key stage and subject area. Or browse the Learning Zone by theme looking for the resources toolbox at the bottom of each page as well as photo albums, fun facts and links to other interesting websites.

[learning.southdowns.gov.uk/resource-finder/](https://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/resource-finder/)

Need more help? Drop us an email

[learning@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:learning@southdowns.gov.uk)

Sign up to our Teachers' newsletter

<http://bit.ly/2CrWRBb>

Booking is now open for our free Schools Conference on 21 March – find out more

[learning.southdowns.gov.uk/learning/calendar/conference/](https://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/learning/calendar/conference/)

# THINGS TO DO IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

Find these & more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [southdowns.gov.uk/events/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



Prepare for your Big Garden Birdwatch at RSPB Pulborough Brooks

Swot up on your night skies at our Stargazing South Downs event in Midhurst

Cycle the Solar System along the Centurion Way trail

Join more South Downs Stargazing Festival events across the National Park

## MOST ASKED...

Send us your questions about a particular area of work in the National Park.

Answering this month is: **James Winkworth, Head of Marketing and Income Generation for the SDNPA.**



### WHY DOES THE NATIONAL PARK NEED A TRUST – AREN'T THERE OTHER ORGANISATIONS ALREADY FUNDRAISING FOR IT?

I often give the example of my father, who cares about the environment but isn't an ardent conservationist. He's not a natural donor to a wildlife charity but he loves walking on the hills and might be persuaded to support an organisation which seeks to protect them. In addition, people have already approached the National Park Authority in the past, wanting to leave a gift in their will to protect the South Down after they are gone. However, as a government body the SDNPA can't offer the same tax incentives that a charity can. This also applies to gift aid which adds 25p to every £1 donated. Therefore, through the Trust we can both better attract donations and maximise their impact.

We will use this funding to support our partners to deliver shared projects benefiting the National Park and which wouldn't happen without us. To put it bluntly there is a huge gap between the National Park's current funding and the National Park Authority and partners ambitions for the South Downs – rough working suggest this is around £62m over the next five years.

### HOW DOES THE NATIONAL PARK TRUST DIFFER FROM THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY?

The National Park Authority established the Trust as a completely independent organisation governed by an independent board of trustees.

Since the two organisations share the same vision for the future of the National Park it is natural that they will work in partnership on many projects, alongside the many other organisations that work to protect our landscape such as The South Downs Society.

### WHERE WILL MY MONEY GO?

Because all the administration costs are covered, any donations you make will go straight to projects. You can choose to make it unrestricted – meaning that it will go to the those that are most urgent– or give it directly to a specific campaign such as the Mend our Way, which is funding a number of vital repairs to the South Downs Way.

Read more of James' answers

**[www.southdowns.gov.uk/asked-james-winkworth-head-marketing-income-generation/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/asked-james-winkworth-head-marketing-income-generation/)**

## NEXT MONTH:

How does the National Park Authority work with farmers, what do you see the future for South Downs farming?

Send your questions for Nigel James, SDNPA Countryside and Policy Manager to **[newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)**





## YOU SAY: FOOTPATHS

Do you have a story you want to tell about the National Park? A burning issue that you think needs to be addressed? Please let us know.



Elizabeth Mandeville says:

*What are you going to do make sure that all the rights to enjoy walking in the Park will be protected, and particularly the right to cross roads in safety?*

*My friends and I recently took a train from Lewes to Southease, with a view to walking several miles on the Downs, starting back from Southease via the A27 opposite Bedingham, and catching a train home. We had not realised how difficult that could be! Most of the drivers continued at speed, some actually accelerating as they came near, none slowing down. Moreover, the bollard in the middle of the road, meant to provide a measure of safety, was very small; think of the needs of families with children!*

*The National Park must insist that both adults and children have the right to know and love the nature around them, especially that of our beautiful South Downs. Have you made a stand?*

*If not, why not? Looking after landscapes, and those of all the species that love them, is your job!*

Andy Gattiker leads on the South Downs Way National Trail and Rights of Way for the South Downs National Park Authority

*We are very aware of the high volumes of fast moving traffic in some parts of the National Park and the difficulties this creates for walkers, cyclists and equestrians trying to cross roads. This is something we are looking at through work such as the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans and Development Control work and our involvement in smaller scale improvements.*

*Unfortunately, there is rarely a simple solution, particularly on A Roads and other strategic routes which often don't meet the criteria for permitting reduced speeds or controlled crossing points.*

*We're not responsible for roads or the rights of way (RoW) network, except the South Downs Way National Trail, but we work closely with Highways England and the Local Highway Authorities to raise awareness of the importance of RoW and the need for users to be able to cross major roads safely. As a result we have seen a number of crossing schemes coming forward recently including some potential improvements with West Sussex County Council.*

*With regards to the A27 east of Lewes, there is some good news. Highways England, who manage it, have produced proposals for a new section of cycleway and an upgraded uncontrolled crossing point at the Firle Road junction – due in early 2018 these should result in a safer crossing point for all.*

*In the longer term, we have commented extensively on proposals for upgrading parts of the A27 east of Lewes and our particular concerns about safe crossing points for RoW. Final details of improvements have yet to be announced but we are confident that, as part of any bigger scheme, facilities will be improved for walkers and cyclists.*

To submit a comment for our newsletter please email [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk).  
For a fast and direct response to your questions please email [info@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:info@southdowns.gov.uk)

Please note that only contributors who submit their full name and address can be considered for publication though we will not publish your full address. Please make it clear whether you are speaking on your own behalf or that of an organisation you represent. We reserve the right to shorten comments and edit where necessary.

## ON THE GROUND

Don't forget to say hello if you spot our rangers and volunteers out working in the National Park. Here's a taste of what they achieved in December 2017.

- Carried out **scrub clearance for butterflies at important chalk downland sites** near Winchester to maintain a stronghold habitat for the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly; at Noar Hill which will enhance habitat for both the Duke of Burgundy and brown hairstreak; and with Butterfly Conservation Sussex at Steyning Bostal chalkpit (see photo) which will benefit butterflies such as Adonis blue.
- Cleared scrub on a Local Wildlife Site at Brighton & Hove Golf Course; at Riverside Park, working in partnership with Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council; at the Long Man Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); and Warren Valley.
- **Brought in remaining water vole monitoring floats** to end surveying for the year. Activity was recorded on the floats even into December showing how mild the weather had been.
- **Helped to lay a hedge at Stedham Campsite**, owned by Midhurst Youth Trust, and introduced Lord Gardiner, the Minister for National Parks, to the process.
- Carried out **surveys along the Serpent Trail** to see what work will be needed to maintain the trail and manage invasive rhododendron.
- Organised and attended a **training day with Historic England on archaeology in the landscape** and assessing the condition of Scheduled Monuments.
- **Finished assessing scheduled monuments at risk or vulnerable** on the Heritage at Risk Register and identified where volunteers can help improve



conditions and carried out ongoing maintenance of the Scheduled Monument at Cloth Farm.

- **Ran a corporate volunteering day** for UK power networks on Iping Common.
- Installed a barn owl box in Findon Valley.
- **Pruned trees on the Centurion Way**, carried out coppicing at Church Copse and tree felling at Graffham Down.
- Led a 'Cache in, trash out' **litter-picking event for Geocachers** at Graffham Down.
- Worked with the farmer and Natural England to **secure grazing of Exmoor ponies on Firle escarpment SSSI** to help control tor grass.
- Carried out site visits with Natural England at the eastern end of the National Park looking at site management and where we can **work in partnership to improve the condition of chalk grassland**.

Thank you to Butterfly Conservation Sussex (@BCSussex) for letting us use their photo of National Park rangers working with them on chalk grassland management at Steyning Bostal chalk pit.

[southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground](https://southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground)





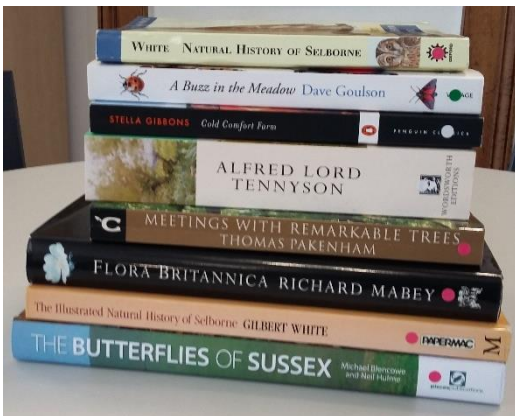
## MAKE A DATE TO STARGAZE

The South Downs Dark Skies Festival returns this February, launching with our big Stargazing South Downs event on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> – with talks, space-themed crafts, astronaut activities, live bats and stargazing.

There are events happening across the National Park over the two weeks. Make sure you get the dates in your diaries now!

See the full programme

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/dark-skies-festival-2018/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/dark-skies-festival-2018/)



## VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE NATURE BOOK

The shortlist for the nation's favourite nature book is out today and includes South Downs son and 'grandfather of citizen science' Gilbert White.

The vote is part of Land Lines a two year research project studying the history of modern nature writing from 1789 when Gilbert White's History of Selborne was first published.

The winner will be announced on BBC Winterwatch. Don't forget to vote!

See the shortlist and vote for your favourite

[www.ahrc.ac.uk/favouritenaturebooks/](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/favouritenaturebooks/)

Find out more about Gilbert White by visiting his house and gardens in Selborne

[gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk/](http://gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk/)



## BOOK YOUR PLACE TO CYCLE THE SOLAR SYSTEM

Cycle faster than the speed of light with science-artist Nick Sayers, on a fun 4.5km bike tour of the planets, along Centurion Way in the South Downs National Park. Explore the worlds of the Solar System at a billionth true scale on this guided ride, with NASA photo flags and planet-sized fruit and veg. If Jupiter is a watermelon, the Earth is a blueberry...

Booking essential. Find out more at

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/event/cycle-solar-system-south-downs/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/event/cycle-solar-system-south-downs/)



## GET OUR NEWS BY EMAIL TO WIN PRIZES

Get this newsletter delivered directly to your phone or tablet. Every month between now until February we'll be drawing one name from our main list of subscribers to win a prize to help you enjoy the National Park even more.

Find out more and sign up at

[southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/](http://southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/)