



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- The **South Downs Way gets a new start in Eastbourne** and you can **bid for the old sign** to support our #MendourWay crowdfunding campaign to fix broken sections of the trail.
- Shhh! To mark **National Quiet Day** we take a look at **'Tranquillity'** one of the seven special qualities of the South Downs National Park.
- Meet the **inspirational walker who's defying hip dysplasia** to take on the South Downs Way.
- What does the **new Agricultural Bill** mean for the National Park?
- **Win a signed South Downs Way print**

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

A27 UPDATE

The High Court has agreed with the South Downs National Park Authority's request to grant permission for a judicial review into Highways England's preferred route for the A27 bypass at Arundel.

Speaking in response to this decision Margaret Paren, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority, said:

"We are pleased that the High Court has agreed with our request and granted permission for the court to hold a judicial review on Highways England's process which led to the preferred route for the A27 bypass at Arundel.

"Contrary to what has been reported, the National Park Authority is not against a traffic solution at Arundel and we will continue to work constructively with Highways England."



SOUTH DOWNS RESPONSE TO NEW AGRICULTURE BILL

On 12 September Defra introduced a new Agriculture Bill to parliament, setting out proposals for post-Brexit legislation for farming in the UK.

Andrew Lee, Director for Countryside & Policy at the South Downs National Park Authority, says:

"Public money should be used for public good and the new Agriculture Bill is a welcome step towards

encouraging and supporting those who manage the land to deliver on key public goods such as flood risk and water management, improving habitats for wildlife and much more.

"The emphasis on farmers working together is great news. Our farmers here in the South Downs National Park are already achieving great things by working together across six farm clusters and I know that they are ready and willing to take on the challenge – including testing and trialing any new schemes that come forward through this Bill."

"Our farmers [...] are already achieving great things by working together across six farm clusters and I know that they are ready and willing to take on the challenge."

Read Defra's announcement about the new Agriculture Bill
www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-agriculture-bill-to-deliver-a-green-brexite



SOUTH DOWNS WAY GETS SMART NEW START AT EASTBOURNE

The old sign is being sold through crowdfunding for the #MendourWay campaign to fix broken sections of the trail.

A special way marker at the start/end of one of the most popular National Trails in the country, the South

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Downs Way, was revealed in Eastbourne on Monday 24 September during Eastbourne and Lewes Walk Fest 2018.

The old way marker, star of a thousand celebratory selfies, will get a new life in retirement. It is being sold through crowdfunding to raise funds for the #MendourWay campaign to fix broken sections of the trail.

"One lucky person will have the chance to own their own little piece of walking history," says Andy Gattiker, South Downs Way Trail Manager. "Old South Downs Way trail markers are always popular but this one, carved from oak and topped by the acorn symbol, will be particularly meaningful for anyone who's completed the trail."

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive for the South Downs National Park was joined by local South Downs National Park ranger Tim Squire; Gill Mattock, the Mayor of Eastbourne; and Lady Lucas, who sits on the steering group for the Walk Fest, to officially 'welcome' the new sign.

The new two metre high sign will greet walkers, cyclists and horse riders setting out or finishing the 160km (100 mile) route which stretches all the way from Eastbourne to Winchester. Across the top it shows in relief each of the major hills that must be tackled to complete the trail. It has been funded jointly by the South Downs National Park Trust, the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service and the South Downs National Park Authority.

The new sign includes an electronic donation point where people who love the South Downs Way can make direct donations towards the trails upkeep.

Speaking about the new sign Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive Officer for the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "Whether they're taking their first or final steps on the trail I'm sure that the 20,000 walkers, cyclists and horse riders who complete the trail each year will find this beautiful marker welcoming and inspiring. And if you've loved spending time on the trail please take a moment to give your 'pound for the downs'."

Gill Mattock, Mayor of Eastbourne, said: "This part of the country is amazing for walkers. The Eastbourne & Lewes Walk Fest draws visitors and locals alike to our glorious rights of way network and the South Downs Way is the jewel in Eastbourne's walking crown."

Other rewards available include signed prints, candle holders and limited edition t-shirts.

Find out more at www.crowdfunder.co.uk/mend-the-south-downs-way

THINGS TO DO IN THE SOUTH DOWNS THIS MONTH

Find these & more events across the National Park and submit your own events at southdowns.gov.uk/events/



- Try out **birding for beginners** at RSPB Pulborough Brooks
- Join an **easy morning stroll** with Friends of the South Downs
- **Forage for wild food** at Queen Elizabeth Country Park
- Go **bonkers for conkers** with Langhams Brewery
- **Discover museums by night** at the Weald & Downland Living Museum and Gilbert White's Field Study Centre



IT'S ALL SO QUIET

Shhh! Wednesday 12 September was National Quiet Day. To mark the occasion we took a look at 'Tranquillity' one of the seven special qualities of the South Downs National Park.

Tranquillity is considered to be a state of calm and quietude. It relates to quality of life, and there is good scientific evidence that it also helps to promote health and well-being.

Tranquillity is recognised as important nationally – for example, our current national planning policy says that we should recognise the value tranquil areas have in our society and protect them accordingly.

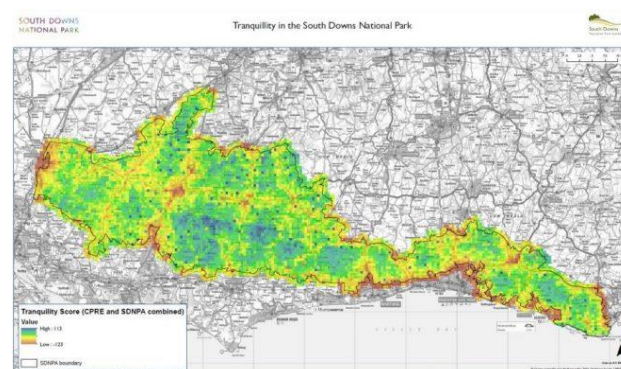
Here in the South Downs tranquillity is an important part of our landscapes' character. Tranquil and unspoilt places are valued by visitors and the people who live here. In a very busy and pressurised part of the country these undeveloped places and areas of good quality dark skies are especially important.

But how do you measure as personal an experience as tranquillity?

To find out where the truly tranquil places are we used methodology first developed by Natural England and

the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). Together with a team of volunteers we carried out surveys on 350 different sites in the National Park looking at 44 different factors that contribute towards, or have an impact on, tranquillity. All the data was logged on a mobile App and the different factors were then related and scored so that they could be put on the map below which shows the relative tranquillity of sites across the National Park, the green and blue points are the most tranquil. It's just one part of the evidence developed to support the South Downs Local Plan – now being examined by a Government Planning Inspector.

Tranquillity isn't a fixed state. Things change over time. Given how important it is to protect and enhance tranquil places we plan to build on this research in the future.



Read the South Downs National Park Authority Tranquillity Study www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/13-04-17-South-Downs-National-Park-Tranquillity-Study.pdf



WALKING THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY WITH HIP DYSPLASIA

Jill Pringle was born with severe hip dysplasia and recently decided to challenge herself to walk the South Downs Way, in aid of Steps Charity Worldwide. We asked her to share her story and hope it will inspire you as much as it's inspired us!

My name is Jill, I'm 46 and I was born with severe hip dysplasia (DDH for short). In plain English that means that my hip joints didn't form properly before I was born – in fact most of my left hip just wasn't there. After nine surgeries, and a lot of time in a plaster-cast called a hip spica, I started walking when I was three.

I can walk, but not with great speed and definitely not with grace! For a lot of my life I've tried to 'ignore' my different hips – pretend I'm like everyone else, avoid situations where it was obvious I wasn't (like sports) and 'protect' myself.

About a year ago, I started to consider things differently. I wanted to understand better how my different-ability has influenced who I am today. What if I didn't protect myself quite so much? Maybe I need to walk more, not less? Maybe I need to find out what my true limits are, rather than stop at the first sign of pain because 'I have a good excuse, right'?

So I've chosen to walk the South Downs Way. And to write a blog to share my experiences and challenges - openly and vulnerably. I'm walking and writing to raise awareness of hip dysplasia, which is actually quite common, and to raise money for a small charity called Steps. They provide information and support for people whose lives are affected by childhood lower limb conditions - something my parents would have loved had it existed back in 1971!

I grew up in Sheffield near the Peak District and I love the countryside. I find being part of nature so inspiring – even when it's challenging, or raining, or both! My

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Dad was a national park warden for a while and I think our national parks are a treasure to be protected.

It was so freeing to be close to such big skies, watching the sunlight reflecting cloud patterns across the chalk hills.

I now live in the south east and a camping trip to Housedean Farm introduced me to the beauty of the South Downs. I'm not able to walk the 100 miles of the South Downs Way at once so I'm going to chunk it up and walk it over a year.

I started by training for a 10K race walk, then did a few test walks on the SDW. I started on the flat along the river near Alfriston (navigating cows), then walked about 6K along the ridge from Ditchling Beacon towards Lewes and back again (navigating rain and wind), and most recently made it up and down Beacon Hill which is closer to the Winchester end. I'm now hoping to walk the first section – 12 miles from Winchester to Exton – before the winter sets in.

My Ditchling test gave me my first views over the Downs from on high. Wow! It was so freeing to be close to such big skies, watching the sunlight reflecting cloud patterns across the chalk hills and corn fields. The walk down from Beacon Hill to Exton and back again was different, cutting across lush green farm fields (more cows!) and following the hedgerows filled with butterflies and grouse. It's really excited me about the variety of scenery and terrain I can expect as I make my way along the 100 miles from Winchester to Eastbourne.

I chose to call my blog diff-abled.co.uk because I identify with being differently-abled. Disabled focuses on what I lack, not what I bring. I'm not less, I'm just different. I see it like this – everyone is good at some things and not at others, and as we age, many of our bodies develop challenges even if we weren't born with them. Everyone is differently-abled and we shouldn't be afraid to show and share how.

I hope you enjoy reading about my journey, as I walk through our fantastic National Park. Maybe we'll bump into each other along the Way? Until then, happy walking.

Stay up-to-date with Jill's journey on her blog diff-abled.co.uk



FUNGI SEASON IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

When you walk in the woods of the South Downs something incredible is happening under the leaf litter. In autumn, the fruits of nature's labour arise in abundance. Words by Daniel Greenwood.

Beneath our feet the fungal web or 'mycelium' of fungi are coalescing with the roots of trees to maintain a biological network crucial to life on earth. The mushrooms we see above ground are the fruiting bodies that produce reproductive spores and allow more of that fungal web to take root elsewhere.

Tree and fungi experts have found that many species of tree depend on a biological partnership with fungi to grow as tall, quickly, and vigorously as they do. This is because many species of tree depend on 'mycorrhizal' relationships with fungi to find nutrients and minerals that they are unable to gather alone.

This is a relationship that could be as old as life on earth.

The fungal hyphae of some species sheath the microscopic root hairs of trees and are then directed to gather the goods. In return the fungus will receive water and other rewards from the tree that it can't extract from the soil on its own. Water is key to a fungus's ability to produce a mushroom and therefore reproduce.

This is a relationship that could be as old as life on Earth. Fungi is found in the fossil record some 800 million years back. It's likely that plants and fungi came onto land in partnership from the depths of primordial oceans.

Away from the woods on the South Downs, the rare habitat of chalk grassland is home to a species of mushroom that has suffered severe declines in the past century. If you look closely this autumn waxcaps, a family of colourful mushrooms, can be seen in the cropped grasslands of the chalk hills. These species are susceptible to disturbance, pollution from chemicals and are destroyed by ploughing. They are some of the

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

most beautiful mushrooms we have in the UK (see photo at the top of this story and below). Some of the common species you can see are blackening and scarlet waxcaps, the last of which glows a bright red against the turf.



On the heaths the iconic but toxic fly agaric grows at the edge of footpaths. Its name derives from the fact that for centuries it has been used to lure and kill flies indoors. In Northern Scandinavia it is used for tribal purposes by the ethnic Sami people and some suggest its red and white colouring is why Father Christmas is dressed in the same colour. Add to that the visions of flying reindeer described during ritual activities, its use to lure reindeer in for herding, and the fact that mushrooms were gathered in sacks and then left to dry in trees of spruce or fir, the original Christmas trees.



Wherever you are on the Downs this autumn, take a moment to think about all that's happening underfoot and how it has helped people to prosper.

Foraging for mushrooms should only be done if you have clear permission from the landowner. Some landowners do not allow foraging.

Some species of mushroom are poisonous to people. Never eat wild mushrooms unless you are very confident in your ability to identify edible species (there are courses) and that there is no contamination in their environment.



COMMUNITY HEROES

The team at Sheet, Petersfield and Steep Community Garden rent their patch from Adhurst Estate Allotments and over the past five years they've planted fruit trees, created a path for wheelchair users, a pollinator garden, an edible hedge for birds and a fire place as well as growing more traditional vegetables and soft fruit. One of their first purchases was a large green house, supported by a £2,000 grant from the South Downs National Park Sustainable Communities Fund, which this year has been home to rocket, lettuce and tomatoes.

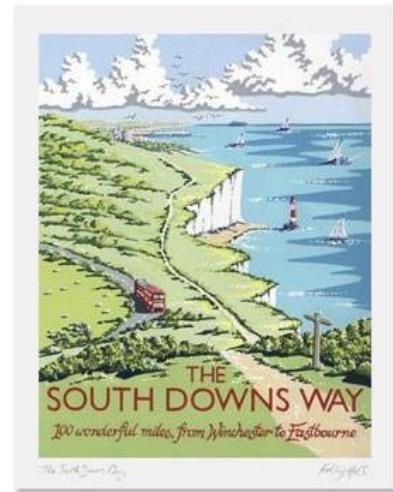
A core team of between five and ten people do much of the work, the local Guide group dug out some of the beds, Sheet school are regular workers, the local Brownies apparently love nothing more than weeding and everyone turns up when there's an event on.

Nothing goes to waste, produce is shared, any surplus is given away locally and locals pop by and help themselves.

Photo shows: Sue Edberg, second left, and other regular volunteers from the Sheet, Petersfield and Steep Community Garden.

Follow the Petersfield Community Garden on Twitter at @GLifeGarden

Find out more about the Sustainable Communities Fund at www.southdowns.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-fund/



WIN A SIGNED SOUTH DOWNS WAY PRINT

Sussex artist Kelly Hall's work is inspired by a passion for British history and a love of vintage graphic art. Each original artwork is designed and created by hand using traditional drawing and painting techniques and materials – stretched paper, pencil and gouache.

A limited number of these specially commissioned, signed prints are available in return for a £40 donation to the #MendourWay crowdfunder campaign at www.crowdfunder.co.uk/mend-the-south-downs-way

But we've also snaffled one to give away to one lucky newsletter subscriber. Anyone who signs up as a new member of this newsletter during October will automatically be entered but to make sure our existing readers don't miss out you can also enter by emailing us at the address below before 31 October 2018.

To enter the draw email us with the subject 'Mend our Way poster please!' to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

Terms and conditions apply, please read them here www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/South_Downs_News_Standed_Park_Farm_Shop_prize_draw_terms_conditions.pdf

ON THE GROUND

From meeting with farmers, offering training and support to local communities, leading walks, organising and training volunteers, controlling invasive species and supporting key species, South Downs National Park rangers are out in the National Park every weekday and many weekends over the year.

Don't forget to say hello if you spot them out working. Here's a taste of what they achieved with our volunteers in September 2018:

- Managed invasive nettles and completed field sign surveys of water voles along the River Meon, confirming their dispersal and continued breeding success
- Welcomed three new apprentice rangers to the National Park.
- Carried out work with the Woodland Trust at Binswood to manage rare wood pasture.
- Worked with Butterfly Conservation to improve habitat for rare Duke of Burgundy butterflies at Kithurst and replaced a vandalised gate at the car park.
- Led three walks in the National Park as part of Eastbourne and Lewes Walkfest.
- Led a team from Amex out on a corporate volunteering task.
- Began the lengthy task of replacing 130 steps on the South Downs Way in West Dean.



- Began restoration work on Burnt House Dew Pond – removing non-native invasive species and replacing fencing.
- Began winter scrub clearance at Beddingham Local Wildlife Site.
- Took the National Park events van and activities to Fernhurst Furnace, Brighton seafront, a number of ploughing matches .
- Undertook training in leading health walks and monitoring the health of heathland Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- Cleared blackthorn at Pheasant's Field local wildlife site near Hassocks to support the brown hairstreak butterfly which needs young blackthorn regrowth to lay its eggs.

southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground

YOU SAY:

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.



To submit a comment for our newsletter please email newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk. For a fast and direct response to your questions please email 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.

MOST ASKED...

Answers to questions about a particular area of work in the National Park – some sent in by you and others that we get asked all the time.

Answering this month is: **Bruce Fowkes, farming officer for the South Downs National Park**



CAN FARMERS REALLY PRODUCE FOOD AND CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE SAME TIME?

In short I truly believe that they can, and there are many examples across the South Downs showing just that. Farmers' core business is to produce food and their office is the countryside (although increasing paperwork requirements mean that more time is being spent in an actual office than some would like!). They spend most days out in the landscape and I've yet to meet a farmer who doesn't want the National Park to be an attractive environment, and to be passed on to the next generation in a healthy condition. Part of my role is to help farmers find ways to produce quality food whilst also building in good environmental management. A key part of this is to maximise the delivery of Agri-environment and other similar schemes, which enable farmers to make caring for and managing the environment part of their farm business. It helps them look after resources that they need to produce food – healthy soil and clean water – and we all benefit as a result.

THE NEW AGRICULTURE BILL TALKS ABOUT PUBLIC GOODS BUT WHAT DOES THAT ACTUALLY MEAN?

This is an interesting question and a hot topic of debate at the moment. Public goods are generally the

things we take for granted, but the market does not currently pay for. This can include protecting iconic landscapes, creating wildlife habitats, providing clean air and water, reducing flood risk and improving access. Early indications are that the new Agriculture Bill will shift emphasis to a policy that rewards farmers for sustainable management and the range of public benefits it provides.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR FARMING IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK?

I believe farming will continue to be an integral part of the South Downs landscape. The emerging Agriculture Bill signals a time of significant change, which is likely to bring both opportunities and threats to farm businesses on the Downs. It is vital that farmers are able to continue growing and producing quality food, whilst also being rewarded for the wide range of public benefits that they provide. In fact, a change in emphasis in this area may lead to further opportunities for diversification and the development of the wider farm business. I see the farm cluster project as being a key part of this, allowing farmers to work even better together, sharing ideas and resources and driving forward the great work they're already doing to care for our landscapes.

Read more of Bruce's answers

www.southdowns.gov.uk/asked-bruce-fowkes-farming-officer-south-downs/

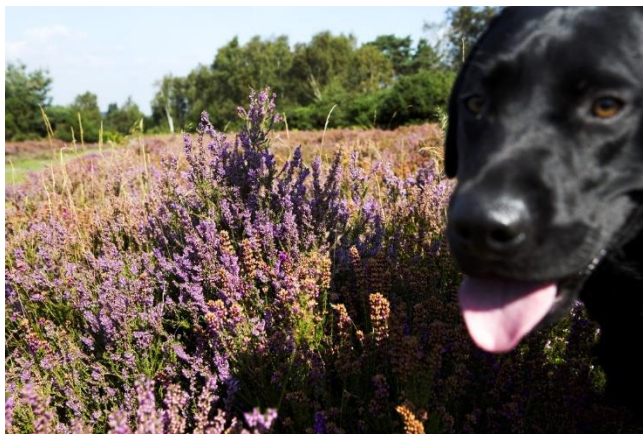
NEXT MONTH: Volunteering in the National Park

Daniel Greenwood, Volunteer Development Officer for the South Downs National Park, answers your questions.

Send them to **newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk**

NEWS FROM OUR HEATHS

Heathlands Reunited is a partnership of 11 organisations, led by the South Downs National Park Authority, who have joined forces to expand and connect rare heathland in the National Park, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Heathland is home to some of Britain's rarest wildlife including all 12 of our native reptiles and amphibians. Over the five years of the project they are creating wildlife corridors forming an area of heathland greater than 1,200 football pitches.



DOG WALKING SURVEY

We are seeking information on dog walking behaviour on our heathlands in the South Downs National Park. Heathlands Reunited has commissioned independent research consultancy, Collingwood Environmental Planning, to undertake a survey on this topic.

The Heathlands Reunited Project is promoting the National Park's Take the Lead campaign, to encourage responsible dog walking on heathlands and other habitats. This survey will provide a current snapshot and will be repeated in two years to assess the success of the campaign.

The survey is aimed at those who walk dogs in the South Downs National Park including dog owners, as well as those who walk dogs for others, such as dog walking professionals.

The survey is voluntary and your opinions and experiences will be very valuable. The questionnaire takes on average no more than 10 minutes, and does not ask for personally identifiable data.

The survey results will be used to inform project activities aimed at conserving and improving heathlands sites and will contribute to a report.

Please take part in the survey at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/K7G8X9M before Friday 26 October 2018



WORK AT RSPB WIGGONHOLT HEATH AND RACKHAM WOODS

During the early autumn the RSPB Pulborough Brooks team will be undertaking essential habitat management work on their wooded heathland sites at Wiggonholt Heath & Rackham Woods.

Heathland requires regular management to help get it into tip top shape. This autumn we'll be working on these two wooded heathland sites to create and maintain heathland habitat and also improve the management of the wooded areas to encourage native broadleaved tree species and create a better diversity of ground flora.

Whilst the work is taking place there will be some disruption with some permissive paths closed whilst forestry work is being undertaken. With forest machinery in operation, the site will be rather churned up and there will be bare areas, stumps and brash. We understand that this can look rather brutal in the short term but in the longer-term, habitat improvements will make the site better for wildlife and for our nature-loving visitors.

See our website for more details of the works or get in touch with the team at the RSPB Pulborough Brooks Visitor Centre. Tel: 01798 875851 or email:

pulborough.brooks@rspb.org.uk

www.southdowns.gov.uk/work-at-rspb-wiggonholt-heath-and-rackham-woods/



SECRETS OF THE HEATH

Heathlands Reunited's biggest event of the year Secrets of the Heath took place on the 8 and 9 September on Petersfield Heath. The weather was kind and more than 2,000 people came along.

Members of the partnership used their expertise to draw attention to opportunities on offer for recreation, education and relaxation on all of our heaths whilst also discussing the importance of Heathlands Reunited and the heaths' specialist species.

Nature and heritage themed educational activities and entertainment, available for children and adults of all ages, included moth trapping and a very popular bat walk with The Sussex Wildlife Trust. The RSPB took children bug hunting to make new connections with nature. The Amphibian and Reptile conservation trust stand was continuously three-people-deep, with people excited to meet the amphibians and reptiles of the heath. The National Trust brought along Hector and Heather to help explain why grazing is amazing. For the first year the local scout group also took over the catering for the event and managed to raise £1550 for the unit.

Our brand new Heathland themed colouring wall from Fancy Features, proved very popular with attendees of all ages, so much so nearly every inch had been coloured in by the Sunday evening. The colouring wall displays a historical timeline of heathland management helping to tell the story of the heath as it was coloured in.

This event was also a perfect opportunity to promote responsible dog ownership on heaths, through both our countryside dog ability challenge and our brand new 'I Take the Lead' pledge which launched last month.



'ARMY' OF VOLUNTEERS TURN OUT FOR ANNUAL SCRUB BASH

On 23 September Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) and more than 40 volunteers converged onto Woolmer Forest, Hampshire (part of the Longmoor MOD estate) to carry out habitat management work for the long-term preservation of the natterjack toad.

In Britain the natterjack toad is almost exclusively confined to northern coastal sand dune systems and coastal grazing marshes. It used to be common on the heaths of Surrey and Hampshire but very few remain and Woolmer is one of its last strongholds. The only natural population left in the south of England, Woolmer has been the source of several toad translocations to other suitable locations.

"Woolmer Forest 350 years ago was completely devoid of any trees. Now pine trees have taken over large areas of the heath. This site is unique in that it is home to all 12 of our native species of reptile and amphibian. It is a site that is actively used by the MOD and in that respect it helps to protect the site". Howard Inns, Vice Chair of Trustees for ARC explained why tasks such as this are so important for the preservation of habitats for our native species.

Even with the habitat in good condition the toads still have to overcome predation, competition and have even struggled with the unusually long, hot summer. There was no lack of rainfall on the day of the task but heavy rain did not dampen spirits and the dedicated army of volunteers cleared a vast area of scrub. The sun emerged for the afternoon and the day was capped by a sighting of the usually nocturnal natterjack toad.

ARC manages a range of wildlife sites across the Surrey/ Hampshire Weald, supported by a group of dedicated and friendly volunteers. Find out more about volunteering opportunities from Ralph Connolly ralph.connolly@arc-trust.org (07387 261217)

Find out more about the Heathlands Reunited project at www.southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited/ and follow all the partners' work on social media using **#HelptheHeaths**

SIGN UP TO THIS NEWSLETTER

Sign up to receive this newsletter by email every month. With the latest South Downs news, stories, ideas for days out, competitions, to hear about our ranger and volunteers' work and much more...

www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/