



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Protecting our pollinators** Find out about a new inspiring project to create wildflower corridors and help rejuvenate vital bee and butterfly species.
- **How volunteering changed Sathi's life** Read the heart-warming story of a grandmother who has found her "happy place" in the National Park.
- **Picture perfect** Be in with the chance of winning £250 by taking part in our annual photo competition.
- **All aboard the Rambler Bus!** Find out about a new way of exploring your National Park.

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

Major campaign is launched to save our bees and pollinators

A campaign has launched to help reverse the decline of bees in the South East and create a haven for pollinators in the South Downs National Park.

The South Downs National Park Trust, the official charity for the National Park, is bidding to raise £75,000 to help restore flower-rich habitats that will protect bees and other important pollinators and allow them to thrive.

The campaign, called Bee Lines, will work with farmers and other landowners to create new wildflower corridors – essentially a "road system" for insects – that will link habitats and encourage pollination.



Through its fundraising, the Trust hopes to create new wildflower corridors across the National Park.



As part of the campaign, people are also being encouraged to support pollinators in their gardens through initiatives such as planting wildflowers and creating a "Bee B&B", a cheap but perfect home for the insects.

It comes as a wide body of research points towards a worrying decline in bees and pollinators across the UK, with one-third of Britain's bee population disappearing over the past decade and a quarter of Europe's bumblebees threatened with extinction. Over 97 per cent (an area the size of Wales) of all flower-rich

New wave of marine protection for coast



The entire coastline section of the South Downs National Park has now been given the highest level of marine conservation protection.

It comes after the Government announced a new raft of Marine Conservation Zones – including one at Beachy Head East near Eastbourne.

This historic move, among 41 new designations, will help protect marine wildlife and follows on from previous announcements of 50 MCZs across the UK in 2013 and 2016.

Jeremy Burgess, Landscape and Biodiversity Lead for Water at the South Downs National Park, explained: “The new MCZ at Beachy Head East is partially within the National Park from the Lighthouse to the edge of Eastbourne.

“Together with Beachy Head West that was previously designated it means that the entire coastline of the National Park is now designated as an MCZ, including the iconic Sussex Heritage Coast.

“The designation will help to protect the important undersea chalk reefs and gullies, which support specialist communities of animals and seaweeds.

“The reefs are peppered with holes created by a shellfish, the burrowing Piddock. Once empty these are occupied by other creatures such as crabs. The two MCZs are also home to the very rare Short Snouted Seahorse and provide nursery sites for plaice and sole.

“We certainly welcome this new designation to help protect our precious coastline and marine life.”

The designations are the final of three phases promised by the Government to fulfil the remit of the Marine and Coastal Access Act.

Picture courtesy of Louise Foster, Sussex Wildlife Trust

grasslands have been lost in England since the 1930s. The South Downs has mirrored this national trend and causes include changes in land use, intensification of farming methods, habitat loss and climate change.



Nick Heasman, Countryside and Policy Manager for the South Downs National Park and who is leading the project, said: “Our bees are in trouble and have

been for quite a while, so Bee Lines is our way of fighting back and protecting these vital pollinators.

“When you consider that bees pollinate around one-third of food crops and 90 per cent of wild plants, which in turn provides food for livestock, you can see the scale of the crisis. Our ability to feed ourselves is intrinsically linked to bees and other pollinators.

“Chalk grassland with a colourful blanket of wildflowers is the perfect habitat for pollinators and was once very extensive across the South Downs. But the past century of human impact has seen this habitat reduced to just 4 per cent of the total area of the National Park, creating fragmented areas that make it harder for pollinators to move through the landscape.

“Through this campaign, we plan to work with farmers and landowners to create new wildflower corridors to link up these fragmented habitats. This will allow the insects to travel along these paths. It’s a double benefit because creating this network will not only allow populations to thrive and support other wildlife, but it will also encourage pollination that will help our farmers.”

Key pollinating species in the National Park include honey bees, bumblebees, and the Adonis blue butterfly.

Tom added: “Pollinators are in trouble across the South East, but with this campaign we can hopefully sow the seeds of making the South Downs an important hub once again for pollinating species.

“We hope the entire community living inside and outside the National Park rallies round to support this worthwhile cause.”

To find out more about the Bee Lines project and donate towards the fundraising visit the Trust’s secure webpage at

www.southdownstrust.org.uk/beelines/

For a step-by-step guide on how make a Bee B&B visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/make-a-beehouse

Volunteers Week: Sathi's joy after finding her passion



For much of her life Sathi Sivapragasam felt like opportunities were limited.

But now the grandmother has found a new lease of life – as a volunteer ranger for the South Downs National Park.

Whether it's conservation work, litter picking, fencing, coppicing or laying hedges, Sathi says the South Downs is her 'happy place' and she can't get enough of volunteering.

For National Volunteers' Week (June 1 to June 7), Sathi helped us to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved and do their bit to help the National Park, including the many "microvolunteering" opportunities such as a two-minute litter pick, tracking birds or monitoring rights of way.

"I just love being in the South Downs," says Sathi, who lives in Hove and is one of 300 volunteers involved with the South Downs National Park Authority to conserve the special qualities of the area.

"Being with nature is very good for my mental health and overall well-being. It's very peaceful. Volunteering has given me such a sense of purpose and just makes me feel great about life, so I want other people to know about its benefits!"

Rewinding the clock, the mum-of-two recalls her early life and the struggles she faced.

"My life has been quite difficult and, the community where I am from in Sri Lanka, there are limited opportunities for women," explains Sathi.

"I was born in between five brothers so they were given all the chances in life."

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With a fiercely independent streak, Sathi moved to the UK during the 1970s and went on to raise a family, working in a bank in Northampton for many years.

But she says she always felt something was missing and was constantly yearning to be closer to the natural world.

In 2007, she moved from Northampton to be closer to her daughter in Brighton – and it wasn't long before she discovered the amazing landscape on her doorstep.

"The fresh air and the views of the South Downs – I will never forget the first time I experienced it," says Sathi.

"I was already interested in walking – that's always been one of my passions – so I've been returning to the Downs nearly every week ever since."

Sathi initially volunteered for the RSPB after seeing an advert and, a couple of years later, heard about the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service through a project called MOSAIC, which helped people from BAME backgrounds get involved with National Parks in the UK.

After undergoing training that included learning about countryside management and conservation, Sathi has been a Volunteer Ranger for the past five years. Every week, the Volunteer Rangers have the opportunity to apply for tasks, including coppicing, building fencing, hedge laying, chalk grassland conservation, and improving public access.

"I just love being outside and being part of a team – I don't care what the job is!" laughs Sathi, whose favourite spot in the National Park is Cuckmere Haven and the stunning Seven Sisters.

"Volunteering has given me a lot of opportunities to experience life and meet new people. I like the camaraderie and I like to connect with nature. There's something very special about it. I'm also really keen for people from minority groups to get involved in volunteering.

"It doesn't have to be a huge commitment, but even things like microvolunteering can have a big impact."

Sathi adds that she just wants to keep on enjoying exploring the landscape so close to her home.

"I don't think I'll ever stop!" laughs Sathi.

"The South Downs has everything – it has the seaside and then the beautiful hills. It's my happy place."

For more information on how to microvolunteer for the National Park visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/volunteering-2/microvolunteering-south-downs/

First Design Awards off to a flying start

More than 50 entries ranging from a cinema to a visitor centre have been put forward for the first Design Awards for the South Downs National Park – and there's still time left to nominate.

The awards opened for nominations at the beginning of March and will close on June 28.



They will celebrate projects that have made a standout contribution to the landscape, heritage, built environment and local communities.

A diverse mix of submissions have been received so far, including a visitor centre,

cinema and restaurant, residential schemes, garden designs and extensions to listed buildings.

Nominations remain open in the following categories:

- Residential (individual building/housing development small/large)
- Non-residential (commercial/industrial/infrastructure)
- Conservation (landscape/buildings/gardens/craftsmanship)

There will also be a People's Choice award – voted for by the general public as their favourite across these three categories.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning at the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "We launched these inaugural awards to raise awareness of the contribution that good design can make to the quality of our local environments and communities.

"The response so far has been wonderful and we've been very impressed with the standard of entries which show real innovation and sensitivity in their design.

"Time is now running out to nominate, so I would urge interested parties to download the nomination pack as soon as they can."

Four trophies are being produced by a leading designer, using materials sourced in the National Park.

A special awards ceremony will be held on November 12.

For more details and to download a nomination form visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/designaward

The deadline for nominations is 5pm on June 28.

All aboard the South Downs Rambler!



Fancy leaving the car at home and enjoying a family day-out in the National Park?

The South Downs Rambler bus is the perfect opportunity to explore the South Downs Way – without expending a huge amount of energy by walking a 20-mile stretch of it!

Taking in a range of breath-taking views and key attractions between Winchester and Petersfield, the Rambler runs every Sunday from July 7 to September 8, as well as the August Bank Holiday Monday.

The bus takes a scenic view from Winchester to Petersfield railway stations and back again – via the Winchester Science Centre and Planetarium, views at Cheesefoot Head, the gardens of Hinton Ampner, the Iron Age fort at Old Winchester Hill, the luxurious Langrish House Hotel and a number of traditional village pubs and villages.

Allison Thorpe, who oversees access and recreation in the National Park, says: "We're delighted to be working with the Community Rail Partnership for a second season and are encouraging people of all ages to make the most of the South Downs Rambler.

"It's a great way to see the South Downs and people can make a real day-out of it. We've chosen Sundays as it's the perfect day to relax and unwind. So leave the car at home for the day and create some great memories on the South Downs!"

Adult single fares range between £2.40 and £6, with returns between £3.90 and £7.90 depending on the stops. All child fares are between £1.80 and £2.70.

For further details and to download a timetable visit <http://southdownsbybus.squarespace.com/the-south-downs-rambler> or www.easthampshirerail.co.uk

New interactive map and education boards are launched



People are being invited to discover the amazing heathlands of the South Downs as a new online interactive map and educational welcome boards are launched.

Stretching across a vast 31-mile area from Bordon in the west to Storrington in the east, the colourful online resource is crammed with information about the 41 heaths in the region and includes downloadable maps for walkers.

New welcome boards have also been installed at eight heaths to give visitors information and fun facts on the biodiversity and heritage of each site.

It comes as Heathlands Reunited, a National Lottery Heritage funded partnership project, begins a series of free guided walks to help people discover and learn more about heathlands.

Katy Sherman, Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: "We're really excited to be launching these three initiatives and collectively they make it easier than ever to learn about our heathlands.

"I'm often asked why the South Downs' heathlands are so precious.

"The simple answer is they are a habitat rarer than the rainforest and are teeming with wildlife, including all 12 of the UK's native reptiles as well as incredibly rare species such as the Nightjar.

"Just one per cent of the original heathlands in the South Downs remains and that's why it's so important we protect these beautiful landscapes."

Over several centuries the heathlands have been separated into 'islands' of habitat – making plants and animals far more vulnerable to local extinction.

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The Heathlands Reunited team have been working over the past three years to ensure greater connectivity between the sites and raise public awareness of the heaths' importance.

Katy added: "One of the easiest ways to learn about the heaths is to walk around one.

"So our new guided walks programme will be routes for all abilities and different interests, whether you're a regular rambler or a countryside beginner, with walks over a range of distances.

"Different walk themes will include ecology, local heritage, conservation, health walks and even a wildlife dog walk."

To see the online interactive map visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/find-your-local-heath



The guided walks programme runs across the whole calendar year and is available to here www.southdowns.gov.uk/walks-talks

The eight welcome boards have been installed at: Broxhead Common, Kingsley Common, Shortheath Common, Iping and Stedham Common, Wiggonholt Common, Lynchmere Common, Ambersham and Heyshott Common.

For more information on the project contact heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk for more information or call 01730 819320.

The project is a partnership of 11 like-minded organisations, led by the South Downs National Park Authority.



A Sand Lizard at one of the heathlands of the South Downs. Picture by D Middleton.

Leading figure in creation of National Park gets new role

Dr Tony Whitbread, who retired as Chief Executive of Sussex Wildlife Trust in March 2018, has returned to take a leading role in nature conservation as President of the charity.



Dr Whitbread was at the forefront in promoting the need for the establishment of the South Downs National Park – a designation realised in 2011.

He also played a leading role in establishing the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre, which holds almost seven million species records – information used to

inform planning decisions.

He joined the Sussex Wildlife Trust in 1991 as Head of Conservation before taking on the role of Chief Executive Officer in 2006. During his time, Dr Whitbread played a huge role as a conservation advocate, battling against road building, urban development, the potential expansion of Gatwick Airport and other countryside loss.

For many years, Dr Whitbread was the national spokesman for woodland issues for The Wildlife Trusts at a national level and is remembered by many for his insight into The Great Storm of 1987 when he presented the positive ecological stories for this memorable event.

Dr Whitbread said, 'Since handing over the reins to my successor, Tor Lawrence, I have been concentrating on my voluntary work promoting the rewilding of nature and involvement in the growing concern about climate and environmental breakdown. I had no hesitation in accepting the role of President which I consider to be an incredible privilege carrying great responsibility.'

Tor Lawrence, Chief Executive of Sussex Wildlife Trust said, 'Tony was instrumental in developing the Sussex Wildlife Trust to be one of the UK's leading conservation and wildlife organisations. The support we enjoy from our members and partners is in no small part a reflection of Tony's infectious enthusiasm and leadership style.'

Win £250 in our Photo Competition



The South Downs National Park photo competition is now open, with a first prize of £250 on offer to the amateur or professional photographer who best captures this year's theme of 'Experiencing the natural world'.

Judges are looking for inspiring images that capture the beauty of the National Park – all while being active.

So whether it's walking, cycling, horseriding, walking the dog, counting butterflies, bird-watching or having a picnic, the judges are looking for images that show people out enjoying the amazing landscape.

Photographs that include people are encouraged, but stunning images taken while people are out enjoying and being active in the National Park are also welcomed.

Steve Watkins, editor of Outdoor Photography magazine, and award-winning photographers Rachael Talibart and Finn Hopson are returning to judge the 2019 competition.

A second prize of £150 and a third prize of £50 are also on offer. This year the judges are also looking for images capturing the amazing wildlife of the South Downs and the winner will receive £100.

Steve Watkins said: "The standard of images entered into the competition has gone up each year, so I'm excited to see what the photographers produce. It's a wide theme, so people can focus on their own personal interpretation of and connection to the National Park. The key to creating a great image is to put in the extra bit of time and effort to elevate the photograph above being a mere snapshot."

Entries close on Friday 18 October. Find out more and download the entry form at

www.southdowns.gov.uk/enter-the-south-downs-photo-competition/

Picture: Autumn Gold by Lorraine Heaysman, winner of the South Downs National Park Photo Competition 2018/2019

The Active Travel Challenge is back!



The daily commute to work can get a little monotonous, but an initiative in East Sussex aims to add some variety – all while helping the planet!

The 2019 Active Travel Challenge is now open to people living or working in the county.

Participants are being challenged until June 30 to register as many sustainable journeys for work such as car-share, walking, cycling, or by bus or train. They can log their daily journeys and see how much exercise they get, as well as seeing how much money they save by not travelling alone by car.

Some £1,500 worth of prizes and vouchers are available, including two-night stay in luxury cabin at Swallowtail Hill worth over £300.

The challenge is part of Active Access for Growth being delivered by Sustrans, supported by SDNP for East Sussex County Council.

Alister Linton-Crook, Cycling Project Officer for the National Park, who is taking on the challenge, said: "Taking part is good fun, great for the planet, saves money and is fabulous for my wellbeing.

"Challenging yourself to travel more sustainably in June could change your life, whether it be car-sharing, using public transport, walking or cycling. It might not be convenient every day but everyone can make the effort to include sustainable travel into their lifestyle and the ATC is a catalyst to challenge yourself to have a go.

"This challenge is a fun opportunity for us to see the benefits of making the extra effort as the website calculates the carbon savings, calorie usage and money savings of the sustainable journeys logged in June."

Visit <https://eastsussex.getmeactive.org.uk/> to find out more and take part.

Volunteers receive grant for project

His nationally-recognised work on wild flowers and butterfly conservation earned him the title "The Green Man of Sussex".

Now the green-fingered legacy of John Gapper will continue for generations to come in the newly-formed Wild Flower Conservation Society.

The community group has been created by the former volunteers at Stanmer Nurseries, near Brighton, with a mission to continue John's incredible work to promote biodiversity.



John, now 78, and his small team of volunteers produced more than 200,000 plug plants that were re-introduced as part of a chalk grassland restoration project and the creation of butterfly banks across Brighton and Hove.

In a similar vein, the Society will promote the importance of conserving our chalk grassland by propagating native chalk Downland wildflowers – in particular species that support a diverse range of wildlife such as Lotus Corniculatus and Hippocrepis Comosa.

The Society has now received a £1,500 boost from the National Park's Sustainable Communities Fund.

The grant will fund a new polytunnel at Stanmer for wildflower propagation. For the weeks and months ahead, John will be working closely with the volunteers to impart his unique and invaluable knowledge on the science – and art – of successfully nurturing wild flowers.

Harvesting seeds from existing chalk grassland sites, the volunteers plan to grow a variety of plug plants at Stanmer to repopulate existing areas and further enhance biodiversity hubs in Brighton and beyond.

Mark Rose, Co-ordinator for the Sustainable Communities Fund, said: "John Gapper has been quietly working in the background of Stanmer Park Nursery for more than 40 years to fulfil a lifetime's passion for conservation.

"His work has been instrumental in protecting precious chalk grassland and the many species these habitats support.

"For that reason we were pleased to be able to give this grant to the volunteers who will continue this important work for years to come."

Bioblitz connects people with nature



More than 100 members of the public joined the Heathlands Reunited partnership on Broxhead Common to learn more about their local heath.

A bioblitz is an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area.

Groups of ecologists, rangers and volunteers worked together to conduct field surveys over a 24-hour period. On the day the public were invited along to join surveyors to learn more about the species themselves.

The bioblitz started with a Nightjar walk to try and spot the rare ground nesting bird that migrates all the way from South Africa. Moth traps were also set out in the evening for counting in the morning. Families joined the species walks to find reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, bees, ants and wasps.

A free face painter was also on hand to decorate the children's faces with their favourite species of the day. In total the Hampshire Biodiversity Records centre collected 264 species records across the day.

Broxhead Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which supports sand lizards, rare heathland birds, and nationally rare invertebrates.

Don't want to miss out next time? Take a look at our Heathlands Reunited webpage to find out more about the project. Visit the events page to find out which FREE events you can attend this summer

www.southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited

These events are made possible thanks to a generous National Lottery Heritage Funded Grant.

Discover the heaths this summer



Did you know the habitat of our heathlands is as rare as the rainforest?

You can discover these amazingly biodiverse heaths throughout this summer as a series of guided walks takes place.

There is no booking required and dogs on leads are welcome.

The programme will feature a variety of themed walks, all aimed at different audiences, interests and walking levels.

Ranger Kate Dziubinska said: "We, along with our partner organisations, are helping to conserve this important habitat for its biodiversity and landscape. We're really keen to show people the work that's been done and how you can enjoy it.

"With an easy yet beautiful route you will see so much wildlife and interesting features throughout our walks.

"So if you're local or just visiting, why not take a couple of hours to walk with the rangers and chill out in nature?"

Upcoming walks:

Fri 14th June - 8.30pm -10pm - Heyshott Common, near Chichester, - Nightjar walk

Time: 1.5hrs **Distance:** 1 mile.

Mon 17th June - 10:30am - Lynchmere Common, near Haslemere

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2.8 miles.

Thurs 20th June - 10.30am - Iron Hill, Liphook

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2 miles.

Thurs 11th July - 10:30am – Heyshott Common and The Roughts, near Chichester

Time: 3 hrs **Distance:** 4 miles.

Mon 15th July - 10:30am – Lynchmere Common, near Haslemere

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2.8 miles.

Thurs 18th July – 10.30am – Iron Hill, Liphook

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2 miles.

Fri 2nd August – 10.30am – Lord’s Piece, Fittleworth, West Sussex

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 1.3 miles.

Thurs 15th August – 10.30am – Chapel Common, near Fernhurst

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2 miles.

Mon 19th August – 10.30am – Iron Hill, Liphook

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2.5 miles.

Mon 16th September – 10.30am – Iron Hill, Liphook

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2.5 miles.

Thurs 19th September – 10.30am – Chapel Common, near Fernhurst, West Sussex

Time: 1 hr 30 mins **Distance:** 2 miles.

Wed 25th September – 10.30am – Ambersham Common, near Chichester

Time: 1 hr **Distance:** 1 mile.

For the full programme visit

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/heathland/heathlands-reunited/walks-talks/>

Things to do in the South Downs this June

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



- Walking boots at the ready! Walk a section of the South Downs Way and raise money for charity on June 21 in our **Way In A Day challenge**.
- Enjoy a gentle evening stroll on June 14 across Heyshott Common, listening for and watching **nightjars** as they mark their territories and attract a mate. Don't forget your binoculars!
- Join the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust for a **guided walk on June 15** around a beautiful heathland site near Liphook to see some of the UK's rare reptile species.
- **Celebrate Sussex Day on June 16** at Arundel Wetland Centre with outdoor walks and talks about our gorgeous habitats and local wildlife.

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!



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