



## South Downs News

# WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **In the footsteps of greatness** Find out more about the exciting new immersive audio experiences that bring together landscape, history and walking.
- **Blooming marvellous!** Learn about the success of the Bee Lines project to create new havens for pollinators, plus a new round of grants that are available for the community.
- **Women and nature** Discover three leading women helping to connect people with the natural world.
- **WIN a family ticket to Marwell Zoo!** Explore the wildlife park and see its latest dinosaur exhibition.

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## Walk in footsteps of natural history icon

**He was one of the pioneers of natural history, transforming the way we look at nature and influencing the likes of Charles Darwin and David Attenborough.**

Now people will be able to walk in the footsteps of Gilbert White as part of a fascinating audio tour launched by the South Downs National Park.

“In Their Footsteps” can be downloaded on a mobile phone and takes walkers on an immersive journey around the beautiful landscapes walked by some of the South Downs’ most iconic figures.

The Gilbert White walk incorporates a 5.6km/3.5 mile loop around the naturalist’s house in the picturesque village of Selborne and the countryside he walked. It was those observations of the natural world on White’s doorstep that led to *The Natural History of Selborne* in 1789 – a title that remains the fourth-longest constantly-in-print book in the English language (after the *King James Bible*, the *Complete Works of Shakespeare* and *The Pilgrim’s Progress*).



The Selborne tour in Hampshire is one of two new experiences being launched by the National Park this spring.

In West Sussex, people will be able to follow in the footsteps of artist

Ivon Hitchens, who sought to capture the beauty of the landscape in his colourful abstract paintings. This 9km/5.5



mile circular walk begins and ends at Pallant House Gallery, in Chichester, where people can view some of Hitchens’ works before heading off to explore the heathland of Lavington Common and surrounding countryside.

The two new “In Their Footsteps” tours follow the success of the trails launched last year in East Sussex.

The tours incorporate Ditchling Museum of Art & Craft, National Trust Monk’s House and Charleston Farmhouse and tell the stories of celebrated artists and authors, including Virginia Woolf and the world-renowned Bloomsbury Group.

Anooshka Rawden, who leads cultural heritage for the South Downs National Park, said: "It's really exciting to be launching these two new audio trails, which are designed to bring together culture, heritage and walking, and to bring new perspectives on the South Downs landscape through the eyes of writers, artists, makers and thinkers.



"Gilbert White is regarded by many as the first ecologist and it was the way he observed nature that was so extraordinary and revolutionary, recording plants, insects and animal behaviour in intricate detail.



"He was the first to distinguish the chiffchaff, willow warbler and wood warbler as three separate species, largely on the basis of their different songs, and the first to describe accurately the harvest mouse and the noctule bat.

"His appreciation of nature's interconnectedness still reverberates today.

"Fast forward 150 years and Ivon Hitchens developed his own connection with nature that was brought vividly to life in amazingly innovative paintings.

"After his London studio was bombed in 1940, his family settled near Petworth and his journeys across Didling, Iping Common, Heyshott, Cocking and Duncton inspired many of his colourful and emotive works.

Each tour includes engaging audio clips and a mixture of photos and archive images, as well as written content that can be displayed in 19 different languages, all to help bring the story to life.

Download the app for free on Android or Apple by searching for "In Their Footsteps".

Anooshka added: "These free tours are a really different way of exploring the National Park this spring and summer and I hope people enjoy being inspired by the stunning landscape and the stories of the people so inspired by it."



Gilbert White's House and Gardens in Hampshire

## Celestial beauty of South Downs night sky is captured



**An awe-inspiring starry night on the South Downs and a "towering super moon" were among the winners of this year's astrophotography competition.**

More than 100 entries were received for our popular cosmic photography contest.

Judging the contest were Dan Oakley, "Dark Skies" Ranger for the National Park, Graham Bryant, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, and Petersfield-based Tiffany Francis-Baker, author of Dark Skies.

Taking the top spot in the South Downs Dark Skyscapes category was "Snow In Springtime" by Neil Jones. The photograph shows the Milky Way in all its glory, arching above the beautiful St Mary's Church, near Upwaltham, in West Sussex.

Runner-up was "Valley of Stars", taken by Michael Harris, which shows a stunning night-time view of Devil's Dyke, near Brighton.

In the Living Dark Skies category, the judges crowned "Stargazing", by Pablo Rodriguez, as the winner. The mesmerising image shows a walker gazing in awe at the beauty of the star-studded sky at Seven Sisters.

Runner-up in the category, which had no geographical limit, was "White Sands", by Jeff Pfaller. The photograph was taken at White Sands National Park, in New Mexico, on a cross-country road trip to visit 14 National Park sites in the US.

The final category had to capture the magnificence of the moon, or the Milky Way, and it was shots of our closest celestial neighbour that captured the imaginations of the judges. The winner was "Towering Super Moon", by Richard Murray, which shows the moon rising behind the Vandalian Tower near South Harting, West Sussex.

Runner-up was a dreamy picture called "Moon and Cloudscape over South Downs", by Graham Devenish, who captured the amazing image of a moon surrounded by swirling clouds from his back garden at Findon Valley, Worthing.

The winners will pick up a prize of £100, while the runners-up will get £75.

See all the winning images [here](#).

The **People's Choice vote** is now open and you have until 20 March to choose your favourite image, with the winner picking up a £50 prize.

# Blooming marvellous! More bee havens to be created



## New wildflower havens for bees and butterflies will be created after a new tranche of funding has been announced.

Grants of up to £5,000 will be available to help create new corridors of wildflowers across Sussex and Hampshire.

The South Downs National Park Trust, the official independent charity for the National Park, is now looking to hear from farmers, private landowners, parish councils, local authorities and schools with land that may be available for planting.

Expressions of interest are being invited for this second round of funding for Bee Lines – an inspiring initiative launched in 2019 to create a new network of wildflower corridors to help support bees and other pollinators. These insects have been on a steep decline across the UK for several decades and are now under threat from climate change. New planting will effectively create a “road system” for pollinating insects, allowing them to move through the landscape more easily.

Two years ago the community rallied round to raise £75,000 to smash the fundraising target and the first round of grants were awarded last year. Eight new wildflower havens will be created at the following locations:

- Prince’s Mead School, near Winchester
- Selborne Landscape Partnership
- Northchapel, near Petworth
- St Columba’s Pollinator Project, near Chanctonbury
- Sompting Wildflower Project
- Lancing College
- Truleigh Hill, near Brighton
- Lewes Cemetery

Collectively, these projects will create around 50 hectares (over 80 football pitches) of new habitat for bees.

Wildflower planting started at Prince’s Mead School last year following a successful application in 2020. Heidi Lancaster, Head of Science, said: “Thanks to the Bee Lines grant, Prince’s Mead School now has a newly extended wildflower meadow which spans the entire length of our playing fields.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

“The children have watched the young plants grow and with the first flowering of the meadow last year, they were amazed to see so many different bee species pollinating the flowers.

“The meadow is a fantastic outdoor learning resource for teaching our pupils about biodiversity and food chains. It’s created a valuable wildlife habitat in the school grounds linking existing hedges and wooded areas. The children are so excited when they spot tiny snails, caterpillars, bees and butterflies.



“They’ve caught glimpses of a mouse scurrying away and seen our local buzzard circling overhead. This is a long-term project which will benefit hundreds of children in the future and will help develop their understanding of the interdependence of all organisms in an ecosystem.”



Nick Heasman, Countryside and Policy Manager for the South Downs National Park and who is leading the project, said: “Bees are incredible ‘ecosystem engineers’, quietly working away year after year to pollinate a third of food crops and 90 per cent of wild plants. But these pollinators have been in trouble for many years and Bee Lines is our way of fighting back, helping populations to recover and become more resilient to human impact and climate change.

“We’re really excited to be launching this second round of funding applications and are looking forward to seeing the existing projects take shape. We obviously have a limited pot of funding, so will only be able to take forward a selected number of projects in this second phase.

“It’s important to recognise that these ‘Bee Lines’ will act as a network for pollinators, connecting with other wildlife corridors both inside and outside the National Park in towns and cities. People can also help by planting certain wildflowers in their gardens that will attract bees and butterflies.

“Our ultimate aim, tying in with the National Park’s ‘ReNature’ campaign, is to help make this entire region more nature-friendly.

“This is wonderful opportunity to be part of nature recovery and helping conserve our precious environment for future generations.”

Grants of up to £5,000 will be available, subject to match funding from the applicant and a commitment to help maintain the wildflowers in future years. Applicants could also use the funding for improving existing land to benefit pollinators, for instance, through cultivation and seed mixes.

Eligible projects for Bee Lines should sit within the South Downs National Park and applications will be assessed against criteria, including habitat improvement, connectivity with other “Bee Lines” and community impact.

Expressions of interest should be submitted by midnight on 20 March.

To apply visit [www.southdownstrust.org.uk/beelines/](http://www.southdownstrust.org.uk/beelines/)

## Three inspirational women linking people to nature



**For International Women’s Day this March, we catch up with inspiring women who are working hard to help connect people with the wonders of nature.**

**Each gives their own account of how they are connecting people to the natural world – and offers their views on why this link is so important.**

### Laura Tong

**Laura Tong is a National Park Ranger for the Western Downs.**



A huge amount of the work we do here at the South Downs National Park involves connecting people with nature, whether it’s volunteer groups, events, working with schools or other groups inside the National Park or facilitating access for those groups to come to here and enjoy what it has to offer.

A highlight for me was working with Artscape, a charity that helps people who are socially isolated because of health circumstances.

We took the group to Butser Hill, giving them artistic inspiration for some wonderful art pieces that they later produced, as well as time for quiet contemplation and reflection in a very scenic and special landscape.

There’s a growing evidence that feeling connected to, or simply just enjoying being in the presence of nature, is greatly beneficial to our health and wellbeing. In nature you can slow down, unwind, tune into the environment and explore what it has to offer.

### Caroline Harriott

**Caroline Harriott is a tenant farmer at Sompting in West Sussex.**

I was very lucky to be born and bred on a West Sussex family farm so my connection with nature started at a very early age. My siblings and I worked and played hard in our beautiful countryside .

Being able to pass that good fortune not only on to my children but to a wider audience has been so rewarding.

Through funding from the NFU I have been trained to be a Facetime farmer with schools and, with Covid restrictions lifting, I’m hoping to use my Farmer for Schools training to go into local schools this year.

It’s so important that people connect with nature and the outdoors for the benefit of their mental and physical wellbeing.

We are tenant farmers on Lychpole Farm, Sompting, a beautiful downland, chalk farm where we farm using traditional, rotation of cattle, sheep, grassland and crops which create a vibrant mosaic, benefitting , soil, water, air, flora, fauna, livestock and crops. All the crops we grow are fed back to our animals which is sustainable and has a low carbon footprint.

We love telling our farming story every October at our Lychpole Farm, pumpkin picking field. Our tractor and trailer rides give a whistlestop tour and shows how our farming methods work with nature to produce quality, local food to feed our country, while enhancing the environment for people to enjoy appreciate and most importantly, understand.



### Alinah Azadeh

**Alinah is the Writer-in Residence for Seven Sisters Country Park and the Sussex Heritage Coast, which both sit within the South Downs National Park.**

Since Spring 2020 I have been running creative writing and walking retreats and groups in the Seven Sisters area (and online), inviting cohorts of writers of global heritage to experience or rediscover this extraordinary, chalkland landscape.

Through its rich metaphors – deep time, borders, edges and horizons – we use our writing to explore migration, belonging, loss, climate change, recovery and more equitable futures. My writer residency there, and wider project, We See You Now, encompasses new writing commissions, ongoing retreats, workshops and The Colour of Chalk podcast. The public will be able to use our self-access writing guide and enjoy our audio commissions and events – evoking trans-global connections across the landscape – from this autumn.

Connecting with nature is an act of creative and restorative care, allowing us physical, mental and emotional space to reconnect with ourselves and the ‘more-than-human’ world, free of the pressures and crises of daily life.

The coastline also reminds us in a very visceral way how important it is to care for what is left of it, in this radically changing climate.



**Alinah’s latest podcast, produced with fellow writer Razia Aziz, is called “Both Sides of The Valley”. The episode is available to listen to on [Anchor](#) and other streaming platforms such as Apple and Spotify.**

## Helping our chalk streams



**Sophie Evingar, from the Watercress and Winterbournes project in Hampshire, gives an update on exciting plans to help care for our precious chalk streams.**

This year is shaping up to be an exciting one for the Watercress and Winterbournes Landscape Partnership Scheme.

This initiative sees the South Downs National Park Authority join 15 other partners in caring for seven chalk streams – the headwaters of the Rivers Test and Itchen. These vibrant habitats are home to many rare and fascinating species.

In 2022, be sure to look out for the first projects to receive the scheme's community grants. This funding enables local groups and organisations to run their own projects aimed at protecting, enhancing, and celebrating the headwaters. With four grants recently awarded, we're excited to see these brilliant ideas come to life this year.

Andover Trees United has received £5,000 to connect the people of Andover, Appleshaw, and Vernham Dean with their chalk streams.

Musical workshops will culminate in performances of stream-themed traditional songs, and artist-led walks will inform the design of engagement resources about ecology and heritage.

Hampshire Bat Group has received £2,000 to install 35 woodcrete bat boxes in stream-adjacent areas. The abundant insect life of the streams makes them rich feeding grounds for many bat species, all of which are under pressure from human activity. By providing safe roosting places, the boxes will help our bat populations to thrive.

New Alresford Town Trust has received £3,090 to enhance one of the River Arle's key heritage features. The historic Eel House is almost unique in the UK and shares its story through special open days. The Town Trust is creating portable display boards and an information booklet focused on the European eel - an amazing but threatened species.

The Watercress Way Charity has received £3,729 to run a programme of public events. Each will create opportunities to explore, enjoy, and learn about the River Arle, its wildlife, and its heritage

Our grant scheme is ongoing, so if you have a great project idea we'd love to hear it! Learn more at [www.hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes/communitygrants](http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes/communitygrants)

## Exploring coastline history



**Archaeologists are exploring the amazing history of Seaford Head as part of a new project.**

The beauty spot in East Sussex is a nationally important heritage site and is classified as a Scheduled Monument, but is at increasing risk of coastal erosion linked to climate change.

Jon Sygrave, project manager for Archaeology South-East, which is leading the project, explained: "Seaford Head is a striking and beautiful site featuring archaeology of multiple periods, including a Bronze Age bowl barrow (a type of burial mound), an Iron Age hillfort and a Second World War reinforced concrete structure.

"Using a combination of non-intrusive archaeological techniques, we are assessing and recording the threatened heritage on Seaford Head. This includes desk-based analysis of historic maps, and aerial, topographic and geophysical survey, and could result in the discovery of previously unknown heritage assets.

"A crucial part of this is using a drone to capture archaeological features exposed in the cliff and accurately map the site's earthworks to create a 3D model of Seaford Head, preserving its complex heritage for future generations."

The project is funded by £18,975 from Historic England with contributions from the South Downs National Park Authority towards fieldwork and production of some short films to open up the debate around heritage and coastal loss, as well as revealing more about how sites can be 'preserved' through digital technologies. It draws together the expertise of UCL archaeologists from Archaeology South-East, artists and videographers along with several key stakeholders, including Seaford Town Council, the National Park Authority and Historic England.

Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the National Park Authority, said: "This project is not only both exciting and timely given we know very little about this site, but it will also give us an opportunity to open up the conversation about heritage loss linked to landscape change.

We have the chance to rediscover lost stories that reveal the deep time of the South Downs."

Artist and writer Alinah Azadeh will be working with the Seaford Head Project team to create a short spoken-word performance on film reflecting both the archaeological findings and the wider issue of landscape change and heritage loss.

# Taking the lead as we put a welcome spring in our step!



After a long winter, the warmth of spring is finally upon us and that means more wonderful walks in the National Park, admiring all the sights, sounds and scents of the new life-giving season. As ground-nesting bird season begins, we catch up with Rachel Guy, Reserve Manager at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve near Chichester, to find out more about the site and her advice for making the most of your walk and helping to keep nature happy.



Kingley Vale is a beautiful mosaic of habitat that a few of us at Natural England look after - a mix of ancient yew woodland, chalk grassland and scrub. Together, it makes Kingley Vale a great place for many species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. And a stunning, peaceful site for people to enjoy.

The site wouldn't be home to so many different species without the help of livestock. Over thousands of years sheep and cattle have grazed the South Downs, allowing the chalk grassland we have today to develop. It's home to many species that couldn't survive anywhere else. The livestock are as much a part of this landscape as the chalk hill blue butterfly is.

While enjoying the site with your dog there are a few things you can do to help keep yourself and your four-legged friend safe, as well as ensuring the abundance of wildlife has the best chance of flourishing. Here are my top tips:

- Please remember to shut any gates you pass through while out and about – our livestock are adventurous

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

and the last thing we all want is a cow wandering down to the car park at West Stoke to share a coffee with us! We need them to stay in the area we've put them in so that they can graze the grassland. Also please don't share your coffee with them on the reserve either. Litter can be harmful to livestock as well as other animals, so please take it home with you and put it in the bin.

- The Nature Reserve is a great place for dog walking, with lots of interesting smells and hills to exhaust them on. My dog loves running up the burial mounds, and I love the peace and quiet I then get in the evening! However, dogs can be scary to our livestock, so please pop them on a lead. Even a dog with the best re-call in the world might be tempted to nip at the heels of a fleeing sheep. It keeps your dog safe to as, although generally slow and docile, our cattle are heavy and could seriously hurt a dog if it got too close.
- With the warmer days you may be lucky enough to spot an adder basking in the sunshine. February and March are the months when they begin to emerge from hibernation and will bask in the warm sunlight. Usually un-aggressive, our native venomous snake can, and will, bite if threatened, which is the last thing anyone wants on a leisurely stroll. So please keep your dog on the lead and stick to the paths.
- Dogs bring us a lot of joy and pleasure but we all know they also bring us daily mess that we're responsible for clearing up. Please always pick up and bin your dog's poo. Yew trees may look a bit like Christmas trees, but they don't need any added decoration! Flicking dog poo off the path doesn't count as clearing it up. Unfortunately the chemicals and raw meat in dog food can make dog mess a bad concoction for wildlife (and humans!) as it can leech into the soil and water system.

By doing these simple things you and your dog will be able to safely enjoy the Nature Reserve as everything starts waking up for spring. Enjoy!

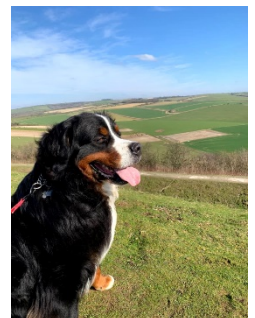
### Take the Lead in the South Downs

With lambs starting to pop up in fields right across the Downs it's more important than ever to keep your dog on the lead around livestock and follow Rachel's top tips.

From March to September it is important to stick to the path on heathland and chalk grassland sites to prevent any birds being disturbed. If you're lucky, and quiet, you might even get a glimpse of a roosting bird from afar – though their camouflage does make them tricky to spot!

### A Dicky Bag for Kavic!

Thank you to everyone who entered our Take the Lead photo competition. We had some brilliant entries showing dogs of all shapes and sizes enjoying the Downs responsibly. Sadly we could only pick one winner and this time it was Kavic and his owner Neil Galloway with this beautiful shot showing a very happy Kavic exploring Cissbury Ring. We hope your new **Dicky Bag** helps you enjoy your walks in the South Downs even more!



## A busy season for rangers



Ranger Chris Lickley gives an update on two key projects the Hampshire team have been working on.



The Western area team and volunteers have been working hard these past few weeks on Hillhampton Down, part of Butser Hill National Nature Reserve. Hillhampton Down can be found on the southern side of Butser Hill, just a short detour from the South Downs Way.

**A National Grid project** aims to enhance the landscape and biodiversity for both wildlife and visitors, while opening up alternative views to draw the visitors' eye away from the power lines surrounding Butser Hill. Part of the project's planned works is at Hillhampton Down, as well as Grandfathers Bottom and the Butser Hill car park.

The team have worked hard removing a lot of the scrub, using a mixture of hand tools, brushcutters and the flail mower, which has been key in removing the densest growth. We've also started work establishing a walking route which leads up to the yew woodland as part of the project's plan for visitors to better enjoy the views. We were really encouraged to find patches of good quality chalk grassland in between the areas of scrub.

Meanwhile, the team has also been working at Fawley Down, a thin, 8-hectare north-facing downland slope roughly two miles east of Winchester. It sits in a valley surrounded by arable fields with no public access and is an "ecological island" of strategic importance for rare butterflies and moths.

As a long and steep slope, scrub management using hand tools is a tough task and we have found it difficult to complete. So instead, for the past two years we have used contractor support to remove areas of very dense scrub and to dig out tree stumps using excavators, as well using our own mower to complete the scrub management.

Fawley Down was originally identified in 2014 as a site of potential to provide additional habitat for rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly, connecting to the nearby Butterfly Conservation reserve of Magdalen Hill Down to the north. Ongoing annual management since then has seen species diversity increase, with blue butterfly species appearing in the last four years.

We're still awaiting the Dukes but the cowslips are surviving well thanks to site management and will be there ready for when they do decide to take the leap!

## New exhibition at museum



**A major exhibition featuring the work of a pioneering artist and storyteller is coming to Petersfield Museum later this month.**

One of the most important figurative artists of our time, Dame Paula Rego is also a sublime and inventive storyteller.

Following a major retrospective at Tate Britain, Petersfield Museum is hosting an exhibition of Rego's work in print, a medium in which she found great imaginative potential.

Displayed alongside Paula Rego's graphic work will be the stories that inspired her, in artists' books published by Enitharmon Editions.

The exhibition will run from 23 March to 9 July.

**Petersfield Museum** re-opened last year following a £4m redevelopment and includes a fascinating display about the South Downs National Park.

## Competition time! 😊

**Marwell Zoo in Hampshire will be unveiling the latest new species to join its wildlife park – a collection of dinosaurs made using more than two million toy bricks.**

The interactive expedition, on display alongside Marwell's hundreds of resident endangered and exotic animals from 1 April until 4 September 2022, has taken professional builders more than 9,000 hours to complete.

Highlights include an incredible seven metre-long Spinosaurus, a nodding Heterodontosaurus, a huge Mosasaur emerging from the water and a Carnotaurus sit-in head.

We're offering a family day ticket (two adults, two children) for the zoo. People signing up to the newsletter during March will be automatically entered into the draw.

Those who are already signed up can email "pygmy hippo" to [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk) before midnight on 31 March. Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#)

# Five ideas for a perfect Mothering Sunday



**Mother's Day, or Mothering Sunday, falls on 27 March this year and is the perfect day to enjoy some family time.**

Here's some ideas on where to go to enjoy a fabulous day-out.

## Best place to see new born lambs



It's pretty much guaranteed that almost anywhere you go in the South Downs you're bound to come across a sheep or two.

For most farmers, the spring lambing season begins in February and runs throughout March and early April.

Many farms will have their own lambing open days – search on Google to find your nearest one.

Saddlescombe Farm sits at the bottom of Devil's Dyke and Newtimber Hill, just outside of Brighton. The current tenant farmers are Camilla and Roly Puzey, who have been at the National Trust-owned site since 2010.

The seven-mile walk from Devil's Dyke to Ditchling Beacon, following the South Downs Way, goes right through Saddlescombe, meaning you'll most certainly get the opportunity to see young lambs weeks or days old, frolicking on the open hillsides.

Check out our walks leaflet for Devil's Dyke and Ditchling Beacon (including Saddlescombe).

Remember, if walking with dogs, keep them on the lead when near lambs, calves and other livestock.

## Best place to see daffodils

Daffodils are the quintessential spring flower, their appearance marking the end of one season and the beginning of another.



The site of of daffodils is universal right across the South Downs but, perhaps the best setting to take in their visual display is Jane Austen's House and Garden in Chawton, Hampshire.

The House is Austen's final home, spending eight years there, finessing her novels, before her passing on 18 July 1817.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The Head Gardener is Celia Simpson, who has been caring for it over the past 20 years, ensuring it remains beautiful throughout the year.

### Best place for spring birds



Spring is special anywhere but especially at Seven Sisters Country Park.

Winter visitors such as wigeons, Brent geese, Black-tailed godwit and other migratory birds begin their journey north to breed in parts of Scandinavia, Scotland, Russia and Finland.

In their stead, summer migratory birds begin the journey to the UK from parts of southern Europe, northern Africa and the Middle East.

From March and April, terns, water pipits and sand martins reappear, along with passing birds such as the curlew sandpiper, swallows and swifts.

### Best place for spring blossom

From around mid-March, if you look close enough at hedgerows and trees, you'll see the beginning of their awakening.



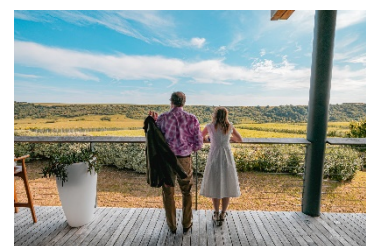
In some cases, common tree blossom can appear overnight, dotting grey landscapes with clouds of pink and cream flowers, brightening the day and bringing with them awakened insects and birds, creating a symphony of spring sounds.

There's perhaps no better place to experience this spectacle than at the National Trust-owned Hinton Ampner near Arlesford, Hampshire.

Open throughout the year, Hinton Ampner isn't just great for blossom but it is also one of the best places to see bluebells, which usually begin appearing in April and last until May.

### Best place to experience world-class wine

Across the South Downs National Park, locals and visitors can enjoy some of England's finest wine, beer and gin crafted by award-winning producers.



The vineyards owe their success and inspiration to the chalky soils and fine climate providing a unique 'flavour of the South Downs'.

In fact, grapes have been growing in the area, which is very similar to the famous sparkling wine region in France, since Roman times.

Why not treat your mum with an English wine tour at one of the many award-winning wineries in the South Downs?

Rathfinny Wine Estate near Alfriston in East Sussex, Wiston Estate near Washington in West Sussex and Hambleton Vineyard in Hampshire all offer tours and tastings in the beautiful South Downs landscape.



## Things to do in the South Downs this March

Please follow the links as booking may be necessary. Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [southdowns.gov.uk/events/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



- Enjoy learning more about a rare and previously unseen tapestry found by chance that has been made into large-scale textile work for a major exhibition at [Towner Eastbourne](#). To coincide with the first ever UK solo exhibition of multi-skilled painter, printmaker, illustrator, Eileen Mayo DBE (1906-1994) a tapestry cartoon by the artist which was found by chance by her great niece will be the centrepiece of the exhibition.
- Design and create your own natural bath soaks at [Butser Ancient Farm](#) – a treat for mum, a friend, or just for you – on 26 March
- Soak up the atmosphere at Petersfield Music Festival Choral Concert on 26 March. All the events for the festival are available to see [here](#).
- Peter Owen Jones will be delivering a talk “What the Camera Didn’t Film” on 30 March following on from his hit TV show, “The South Downs – England’s Green Mountains”. Peter will share some of the fascinating things that happened whilst he was making the documentary series. The talk will be held at St Nicholas Church, Arundel, and is organised by [Arundel Museum](#).

## 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? Or would you like to pen your own article about why you love the South Downs? Please let us know!



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)

## SIGN UP TO THIS NEWSLETTER

Sign up to receive this newsletter by email every month!

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

### Pic credits

P1 (Gilbert White Portrait) Thomas Chapman; P1 (Ivon Hitchens) West Sussex Record Office Garland; P2 (mouse) D Middleton; P2 Gilbert White's House Museum; P3 Manfredxy; P5 left Chris Bean; P5 right Historic England Archive; P7 Right *Girl Reading at Window* from *Jane Eyre*, 2001 – 2002, courtesy Paula Rego and Cristea Roberts Gallery, London © Paula Rego