

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk www.coppice.co.uk www.woodfairs.co.uk

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May 2010

Using your woodland to heat your home

One of the best things about owning your own woodland, is you need never be cold – providing you have a great woodstove that is!

On the 22nd May we have a meeting on this topic, held at the Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex. Excellent speakers, Woodlands TV and a truck with working stoves, what more could we want?



YOU. We would love this event to be very full. Room for 70 people, so book now!

A walk with Julian Evans

Last month we had a woodland walk with Julian Evans and Steve Wheatley. It was a marvellous day, a beautiful woodland and we learned so much. You can read more about it on the website:



<http://www.swog.org.uk/events/swog-meeting-laughton-woods/>

Make money from your photos

Woodlands.co.uk are on the look out for photos of people involved in Family Forestry.

This month we are looking for photos of people **using tool sheds, tool storage and shelters.**

Send photos to margaret@woodlands.co.uk.

£10 Amazon voucher for every photo used.

South East

Woodstoves - 22nd May

“Using your wood to heat your home”
Flimwell, E Sussex

Bats and moths

Northiam
12th June. An evening BBQ with a moth trap and hopefully some bats!

South West

Anyone in the SW willing to host a SWOG day?

Save the bees!

Paul has started an online petition that he would like you to look at and sign.

<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/Beekeeping/>

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Yorwoods courses

May 5th 2010: Introduction to Woodfuels

Sun Hill Centre, Skipton

This course covers the core concepts of renewable energy and looks in more detail at the opportunities afforded by woodfuel including woodfuel heating technologies and woodfuel processing and handling equipment.

June 1st-3rd 2010: Ignite: Woodfuel Production and Supply

Dalby Forest Visitor Centre

The intensive course! Our Lantra Awards accredited 3-day Ignite course covers the whole wide world of woodfuel production and supply, from the basics of woodfuel processing, boiler systems, burn chemistry and units and conversion factors to marketing and transport! We also include site visits.

June 10th-11th 2010: Energy Crops

Market Weighton Business Centre

Designed to help any existing or potential producers of energy crops, and covers the whole range of topics, from the benefits, management and harvesting, environmental impacts and the potential financial returns.

June 24th 2010: Firewood Production and Supply

Askham Bryan Suite, Thirsk Auction Mart

Aimed at existing and fledgling firewood businesses, this newly developed course will cover many aspects of firewood as a renewable fuel.

July 9th 2010

Managing Woodlands for Woodfuel

Sandall Beat Visitor Centre

A very popular course in the past, this Managing Woodlands for Woodfuel course is aimed at owners and managers of woodland, estate and farm foresters, and those looking to use their natural resources to produce and supply woodfuel. This course will cover uses for your wood, measuring quantity and quality of timber, woodlands management, harvesting and extraction and conversion of timber to product.

Contact Carrick for prices and more information.

carrick@yorwoods.org.uk

Events North

Mike and others had a great day in his wood – write-up coming soon.

Anyone like to offer an open day in their woodland?

Woodlands.co.uk blogs

Bee keeping

Snow pictures

Logs, fires and stoves

www.woodlands.co.uk/blog

Scotland

Royal Highland Show 24- 27th June

We will be there! Hope you are too.

<http://www.woodfairs.co.uk/scotland/>

BTCV Scotland courses

http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/scotland_training

Chainsaw courses

<http://www.learnirectscotland.com/Search/advancedcoursesearch>

<http://217.199.176.228/KMSearch/Results.aspx?kw=chainsaw>

WoodlandsTV.co.uk

Conifers

Squirrel control

Big trees, little trees

Woodland Entrances

Royal Forestry Society

Unveiling a woodland cornucopia

From the practical to the theoretical, and even the historic – this year's programme of events announced by the Royal Forestry Society (RFS) covers a broad spectrum of forestry issues.

Those interested in deer management and/ or game keeping can head to meetings in Arnside, Cumbria; Appleton Le Moors in Yorkshire; Oakham in Leicestershire and Horsmonden in Kent.

If wildlife conservation is top of your agenda, local RFS Divisions will be looking at silviculture, butterflies and grazing in Eastbourne; there will be talks on nature conservation in woodlands and forests in Wrexham; the spotlight falls on ravine woodlife and nationally important species in the Wye Valley and switches to nature conservation in Kingsbridge, Devon.

Restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) is the focus in Grizedale Forest, Cumbria; Appleton Le Moors, Yorkshire; Baddesley Clinton in Warwickshire and Earls Colne, in Essex.

Biomass, broadleaved management, community woodlands and restocking, continuous cover systems, coppice management, forestry research, first thinnings, making woods pay, management of parklands, medieval timber construction, mixed forestry, Napoleonic Oaks, owning a seed stand, planting difficult sites, red needle blight, sawmilling, veteran trees and historic landscapes are just a few of the other topics covered throughout the spring, summer and autumn.

RFS chief executive Dr John Jackson said: "Between them, our 21 local Divisions organise a fantastic array of meetings and talks which are open to RFS members across the country, and, by arrangement, to members of the public. These meetings enable us to tap into a very rich vein of expertise across England, Wales and Northern Ireland."

To view the full calendar of events visit www.rfs.org.uk and follow the 'Get involved' links.

Central

Alvecote wood open days. Tamworth

Sarah and Stephen have a lovely ancient semi-natural wood, which is not open to the public all the time, but they do have some open days.

Sunday 23rd May. The woods are open from 10am to 4pm. Parking is limited. There should be a good display of daffodils in March and of Bluebells in April. You can also see some of the coppicing work they've been doing over the winter. Further details are on www.alvecotewood.co.uk

East Anglia

Essex: 2nd May.

<http://www.swog.org.uk/swog-events/woodland-walk-2nd-may-2010-essex/>

Wales

BWW meeting 5th June near Llanddewi

Come and find out about Better Woodland for Wales Scheme. More details to come. Email Tracy if you are interested.

**Woodland Skills Centre,
Wales**

www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

Making a shave horse, by Dennis

At the Woodland Skills Centre, Bodfari

This is a very practical course and very rewarding: you get to choose the wood you use, and you take home a shave horse that you have made yourself. Rod and Alan Waterfield run the course at their Centre in the Clwydian Hills, close to Denbigh, and easily reached from the A55.

The course takes place in a large workshop so is unaffected by the weather. Every tool you could possibly need is to hand—and some you might not have considered. Even as a first-timer with a drawknife you get the help and encouragement to ensure that you succeed.



After cleaving a log we were quickly into shaping our first spindle, trying to avoid “bananas” and “balloons”, so that a reasonably parallel piece could be finished in a rounding plane. Producing the legs was straightforward, reducing the end of a 3 inch log to fit into another rounding plane. It was more challenging to get the top and bottom spindles just right: tricky to get both ends on the same axis.

The side arms were formed from 30” logs cleft down the middle. Ash gave the best results with little or no spiral in the grain. The split pieces were clamped together for drilling, the hole s positions chosen to allow for the leg lengths of different users.

The most demanding part for the participants was to drill the seat piece so as to create sockets for the splayed legs, and the horizontal hole for the spindle on which the arms would be supported. Team work made a difference at this stage, ensuring that that verticals were true, and that angles were maintained. Once the top board was cut to shape and a peg made to hold it in position on the seat we were done with a dozen components to load into the car for the drive home.

Assembly has to wait until the spindles have dried out: they swell after processing in the rounding plane. Meanwhile there’s time to set about ordering suitable tools.

I have no hesitation in recommending this course. The tutors are knowledgeable, friendly, and helpful. The setting is peaceful, and the workshop well equipped.

Anyone else made a shave horse? Mike and I made a very lazy one!



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Ancient and modern: Historic woodland industry breathes life into Surrey forests

Columns of sweet smelling woodsmoke rose up over the North Downs on Saturday for the launch of the Surrey Hills Charcoal Company. The hub of four ring kilns at Mountain Wood Farm, between Shere and East Horsley, run by John Sinclair and Andy Todman, will supply a range of high quality, Surrey Hills-branded charcoal products made from local wood, to garden centres, shops and garages across Surrey.

Thanks to a special hopper that grades the charcoal, they will be bagging up larger pieces for BBQs, supplying speciality willow for artist materials and smaller sizes as a soil improver for the horticultural industry. Charcoal is even used in cosmetics. Surrey Hills Charcoal is one of the first products to bear the Surrey Hills logo, which guarantees its green and sustainable local credentials.

This enterprise takes charcoal burning from cottage industry level to sustainable county-wide business, a major leap forward made possible through a £2,500 grant from the Surrey Hills Sustainable Development Fund.

John Sinclair is Chairman of the Sussex and Surrey Coppice Group, and he has been making charcoal on a small scale in Surrey for many years as part of his work sustaining traditional coppice woodland. Andy Todman, who bought the 33 acre wood complete with eco-friendly barn in 2006 as a retreat from the rat-race, quickly realised he needed to manage the timber. A chance encounter with John at the Surrey County Show soon led to discussions about the possibility of setting up a charcoal business.

"I bought a kiln but it became clear a man on his own isn't going to be able to make a viable business," said Andy, "So I suggested we join forces."

"This is a very collective and collaborative project," explained John, "The land here is woodland heath with birch trees. You can coppice birch and it grows very fast. So many of Surrey's ancient coppice woods have been neglected and charcoal burning is a means of keeping them productive. I manage areas of woodland for Surrey Wildlife Trust, coppicing the birch and other native species as part of their conservation work and so charcoal burning is an entirely sustainable industry.

"Charcoal burners and coppice workers will be able to bring their wood here to the kilns as a central hub. We are also planning to have other woodland activities here including wild mushroom growing, and educational courses such as Windsor chair-making.

"We will distribute the bags of charcoal to shops and garages throughout Surrey. Local wood for local BBQs," he said.

The artwork for the Surrey Charcoal Company bags features charcoal drawings by artist and Merrist Wood-trained coppice worker, Kat Bray, and she was demonstrating her drawings at the launch. Windsor chair maker Ben Willis also gave a wood working demonstration.

For more information about the Surrey Hills Charcoal Company go to www.surreyhillscharcoal.co.uk



Woodland Butterflies in May

May is an exciting time for butterfly spotting. Many species are emerging and will take advantage of the high levels of light and abundant ground flora in our woodlands. As the month progresses and the tree canopy thickens, the butterflies will be more in evidence in rides and clearings.

For many butterfly species, especially those that overwintered as adults, May is a time for egg-laying, producing the new brood which will see out the rest of the summer. Brimstone females (paler than the rich greeny-yellow males) will seek out Alder Buckthorn to lay their eggs. Peacock and Comma butterflies will be egg-laying on nettle and the new broods of all these species will start to emerge in July.

May is also the time to make the most of our Orange-tip butterflies. The male's, with their bright orange wing-tips, will be all but gone by June. The females last a few weeks longer but, as they lack the orange wing-tips of the males, they are often dismissed as 'Cabbage Whites'. White butterflies around Cuckooflower are worth checking for the Orange-tip's distinctive 'camouflage' underwing and if you're lucky you might find one of their orange eggs on the stem just beneath the flower head. The other white butterfly worth mentioning is the elusive Wood White. This true woodland specialist is now limited to just a few woods in the UK where it inhabits grassy clearings and ride edges in partial shade. It's dainty, slow and 'fairy-like' flight is unlike any of the other whites, moving like a piece of tissue paper caught in the breeze – a magical thing to experience.



For colour the Green Hairstreak is hard to beat, but its stunning metallic green underwings also make it hard to spot. It's our only true green butterfly but looks dull in flight due to its brown upperwings. Upon landing (often on Gorse, Broom or Bramble), it closes its wings to display the stunning metallic green of its underside. Although hard to spot, it's a very territorial butterfly so if you catch a flash of green or deep brown its worth checking the same area later. (photo by Jim)

Speckled Wood butterfly is another very territorial butterfly. It's speckled brown and white wing pattern exactly mirrors the dappled light and shade that this butterfly prefers. Although individuals only live for a week or ten days these butterflies are continuously brooded so can be seen in woodland throughout the summer and into late Autumn.

Butterflies of other habitats also often stray into woodlands; if your wood neighbours grassy areas or rough meadows look out for the tiny, Small Copper and if you're close to gardens look out for Holly Blue.

All in all May is an exciting and colourful time for butterflies. Then, in July the real kings of woodland butterflies emerge!

Steve Wheatley
South East Woodlands Project Officer, Butterfly Conservation
swheatley@butterfly-conservation.org

Bits and pieces!

BTCV Courses

BTCV have some good courses coming up including:

Pond Survey and Assessment (Fauna) Sunday 9 May at Singleton (afternoon and evening)

Introduction to Environmental Conservation, Saturday 15 May 2010 at Singleton

Woodland Ecology and Tree ID, Saturday 22 May at Singleton

For more courses across the country visit their website: <http://www2.btcv.org.uk/>

Kent Medway Valley have some great activities coming up for all the family:

<http://www.swog.org.uk/events/kent-medway-valley-activities/>

Centre for alternative technology woodland courses

<http://www2.cat.org.uk/shortcourses/index.php?cPath=6>

Orchard Barn:

Would you like to learn how carpenters in the C17th century built a roof from scratch?

Come on a course at Orchard Barn and learn how. This is a unique opportunity to work with authentic hand tools and local oaks in traditional ways.

Rick Lewis of Traditional Oak Carpentry fame will be your tutor for the week, at the end of which you will have constructed pairs of rafters and helped to literally 'raise the roof'!

We will only be building this one roof. It is now or never - courses available in May, June and July this year.

Want to know more, or reserve yourself a place on one of these once-in-a-lifetime courses? Please phone Sarah on 077660-54042 or email sarah@orchardbarn.org.uk

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Llais y Goedwig invites you to the summer Woodland Management Roadshow - theory and practice in community woodland management. We will be holding four roadshow events between July and September 2010.

<http://llaisgoedwig.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Roadshow.pdf>

SW Wales: 17th July 2010 - Troserch Woods near Llangennech, Swansea

Mid Wales: 24th July 2010 - Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, Dolforwyn woods in Abermule

N Wales: 7th August 2010 - Moelyci near Tregarth, Bangor

SE Wales: 11th September 2010 - Blaen Bran Community Woodland, Cwmbran

Book Your Place!

The day costs £15 per person. A limited number of free places are available for Llais y Goedwig members.

Thanks to the RFS for these snippets

Are you 'tick aware'?

The peak season for ticks is approaching, and the UK's Lyme disease charity, BADA-UK, is warning field workers and members of the public to take precautions to prevent the tick-borne disease.

Ticks carry Borreliosis (Lyme disease) and are found throughout the UK, particularly in areas of good ground cover and diverse wildlife. Field workers are recommended to carry a tick remover and antiseptic wipes, and should check themselves regularly.

Leaflets, posters and details of Tick Prevention Week (12-18 April), can be found at www.tickpreventionweek.org.

Grants to help woodland birds

The FC in the North West is pioneering a new type of grant that will encourage landowners to reverse the decline of regional woodland birds. The financial support is being offered to improve the habitats of 18 vulnerable species, including the Redstart and the Pied Flycatcher. The grant is being introduced in response to the Bird Conservation Targeting Project, which has identified breeding hotspots for certain species.

(see www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/projects/targeting)



To be eligible for a grant, woodland must be within a target area for the chosen species or be supported by local knowledge and expertise. Grant guidance and application forms are available at www.forestry.gov.uk/northwestengland or via Paul Vickers: 01606 324952.

Public rights of way Part 3 by Tracy Sutton

Ideas on resolving issues of conflict associated with public access

It is a challenging part of my job to balance the interests of all users of land where PRoW exist. Conflicts of use and interest occur when routes are shared by different legitimate and illegitimate users. If the conflict is not addressed it has potential to escalate and result in prejudiced pressure on a certain user group. Dealing with a problem immediately avoids the situation escalating.



It is difficult to advise generally on this issue as there are so many unique, influencing factors and not to mention the legislation that must be complied with. Most issues can be resolved by observing the landowners and the county council's statutory duties e.g. keeping a woodland PRoW clear of over/under growth, fallen trees and clear way marking to help prevent trespass.

Careful planning of PRoW features will help manage visitors to your land; contact your County Council for advice. Some casebook examples usually include making it physically impossible for illegitimate users, balanced with easy access for legal users e.g. use of kiss gates, squeeze gaps (to British Standard) strategically placed rocks, tree stumps and trunks by the landowner. Any new structures (gates, stiles, bollards etc.) on a PRoW require authorisation from the Council as Highway Authority. The England Woodland Grant Scheme provides standard costs for public access features that the County Council is unable to assist with from interpretation boards, surfacing, and motorbike inhibitors to leaflets and picnic benches.

In Part one, we addressed that even though dogs, mobility scooters and pushchairs can use PRoW there is no expectation that the way is suitable for their use. If you are experiencing damage to PRoW furniture and your associated adjacent property (fences etc.) by users, consider improving the access to the standard that is in demand e.g. by installing dog stiles/hatches or a self closing gate.

Part 1 also discussed that users of PRoW have a responsibility to travel as to not to cause danger to other users, damage to property (includes the surface of a PRoW), not to cause a nuisance and to keep to the PRoW. Although this seems pretty common sense, not all users are fully aware of what is expected of them and are obliging when the issue is politely explained to them. A frequent issue for example here would be to diplomatically explain that a PRoW is that only and not open access land. Managing users through education where possible will avoid confusion and frustration, and will increase tolerance for others.

Education ideas: Posters, parish & school magazine articles, door to door drops (small communities), church announcements and seen encouragement of desired behaviour on site.

Maybe even a brief sign on location to display the value of the site and what the roles of both the visitor and landowner are to manage and protect it. Local dog wardens can be contacted for advice and do you have a Rural Policing Liaison Group that can help? Contact your local Council; they should have a forum for PRoW where users and landowners can get/give advice to encourage responsible use for the benefit of all.

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Illegal use/events by non permitted users is a difficult one and not some thing I can give plain advice on resolving due to the local details involved, it is a civil matter and requires to be reported to the police every time it happens to build up evidence in your case. Reporting undesired behaviours to appropriate authorities even though little action may be taken it is a record of the situation. The Council as Highways Authority can assist little if the route is open and safe for legitimate users.

The best plan of practise is to find out why the conflict exists have a look at any local council advise, policies and protocols, consult user groups about problems and possible resolutions e.g. 4x4/quad user groups, survey and observe the users you may find your own solution once you understand the behaviour.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/> has helpful publications and the Institute for Public Rights of Way has some further information on PRow <http://www.iprow.co.uk/>

<http://www.pittecroft.org.uk/5709.pdf> is a link to an abridged version of the British Standard that affects PRow.

A woodland walk in Essex



You are invited to walk in Chris' wood on the 2nd May.

Come and enjoy this ancient woodland with old oaks (with preservation orders) and a mixture of overstood sweet chestnut coppice hazel and some newish planting of sessile oaks, chestnut and hornbeam, and meet other woodland owners.

<http://www.swog.org.uk/swog-events/woodland-walk-2nd-may-2010-essex/>



News from the woods

So, what have we all been up to?

Darren: Made a shave horse yesterday. Charcoaling tomorrow, making mushroom logs for sale, finishing off the rabbit fence and trapping the rabbits inside. BBQing rabbit.....

The Barrowers: Finished the last planting of Sweet Chestnut and Hazel to restock after clearing an acre of overstood Sweet Chestnut and Old Hazel.

Removed the last redundant 6 foot plus tall Deer Fencing lengths that did nothing except guide the deer to certain paths. This had been up for years. Anybody need it? It's in reasonable lengths in East Sussex.

Looked at lots of rain and our seasonal stream.

Saw Marsh Tit at our Camp at the feeders. Our resident speaking pheasant has returned for the second year, he can be nearly hand fed when he hasn't got his flighty missus with him.

Henrietta: Saw a grass snake in the woods on Saturday. The primroses and violets are looking beautiful at the moment. Wish I could say the same for the brambles. I am trying to make a track through and the brambles are a real problem. The ground is still very wet so was able to pull a few out and get a lot of root. Never mind, keep plodding on. I wish it was easier to photograph butterflies, I have no luck at all. Twice I saw a Brimstone being chased by a smaller dark coloured butterfly.

MatreCycle: First overnight camp out of the year at the wood last weekend -

what a confusing place to be - sun shining with temperature very warm, trees - no leaves and barely a small leaf out that said - birds on song, singing -

kelly kettle performed fantastically well - and deck chair had plenty of use

Managed to bury a two metre section of polypipe to replace a boggy ditch crossing, also hung up (rather late) a bird box

Adam: We had our first trip to our woodland as its owners :-)

We didn't get to do too much ... checked our keys to the gate worked, got our 4x4 stuck on an access track, then patched up the access track with a couple of tonnes of gravel (not that 2 tonnes goes very far but its a start and all my trailer will take). We then had a rest while we enjoyed a lovely picnic, enjoyed a nice walk round the place discovering new features and collected a very small amount of dead wood from the floor as firewood leaving the vast majority of rotting fallen wood as a place for the bugs to live. Then finally we just sat in the woodland thinking about the TPO and what plans we needed to write up.

John: We travelled across on Easter Thursday, got caught in a blizzard as we crossed the Radnor Forest.

When we arrived at the woods it was wet and cold and the mud had returned with a vengeance. My wife hates the mud. We soon got the caravan warm and aired the beds. The weather improved the next morning and continued to get warmer and by the end of the week were eating outside in our shirtsleeves.

We put shelters round the trees I had planted on my last visit, washed the caravan, milled some spruce and cut some logs. I put some stone in some of the pot holes in the green lane that leads to the woods. The lane has suffered from water continually flowing down it over the winter. Visited the neighbouring farmers.

Woodbodger: With this lovely dry weather this week I have been able to get to grips with the scrub that I cut down last year in what was



supposed to be an open clearing, it is getting closer to that now. Today I had a visit from a management planner. I have decided to go down the grant route, spurred on by this forum. I have had one other visit from a management planner who apart from wanting, up front, £500 over and above the grant for working out a plan was not aware that nest boxes clearings and tracks could all be grant aided. My new agent seems more up to speed we had a good walk around the wood and he came up with sensible suggestions that I can see will improve things for future generations. I have started topping up the much decimated log store which is down to 1/4 full of dry logs, not bad since we have had the coldest winter since Nelson first cried "sacre bleu" as his pyramid of brass cannon balls rolled across his quarter deck (the co-efficient of brass being that much greater than steel brass balls can shrink enough to cause them to roll off the tray {called a monkey} that holds them). Did I wander off there for a moment? Anyway the log shed is being refilled and I figure that as long as it is as full as it was last year I should be okay.

Exeldama: Only 1 session at the wood this month what with work commitments.

But over 4 days i dug two ponds, cleared a track way, widened a ride, planted 11 trees, dug an interconnecting trench for another pond. Strengthened my main entrance, ate sandwiches, cleared around a lovely oak, bought in a lovely picnic bench, started a circular pathway around the wood, ate more sandwiches, fed the birds, watched the first ponds colonial inhabitants. Removed an old barbed wire fence, ate additional sandwiches...and revised for an exam whilst watching Marsh Tits eat..My Sandwiches

Nick: Windflowers. The number and shape of the wood anemone or windflower (*Anemone nemorosa*) petals varies and occasionally you find some with a purple tinge. They grow from underground rhizomes which spread just below the soil surface, forming long spreading clumps that grow quickly, contributing to its rapid spread in woodland conditions, where they

often carpet large areas. You can see a clump exhibiting rounded petals and then another neighbouring clump will maybe have long ones. According to the book the number of petals is six or seven but here at Knowlands you may find eight or nine readily enough and the occasional fiver. No one has yet reported a ten-petalled anemone this year but in the past tenners and even up to thirteeners have been found. So there is a challenge for the children.



Here's a charming thing I found on the internet:

This name, directly related to its botanical name, is derived from the Greek. Greek legend says that Anemos, the Wind, sends his namesakes the Anemones, in the earliest spring days as the heralds of his coming. Other sources claim that the flowers only opened when the wind blew. The second part of the name nemorosa refers to its woodland habitats and derives from the latin 'nemorosus' meaning 'wooded or covered with trees'.

Although I have called them petals, I also found this:

As in all the Anemones, there are no true petals. What appear to be white petals are in reality tepals, which have assumed the colouring and characteristics of petals.

Birds. A nightingale has been singing somewhere near the old railway track. It arrived on Sunday night, a fortnight early (I do not expect them until 1st May, two weeks after



the swallow and the cuckoo). Last night we could not hear it so perhaps it has moved on. The cuckoo that I mentioned last week has been calling from time to time. Several visitors have remarked that they have heard their first here. A male swallow arrived at the farmstead to stay. The males have long trailers to their tails, which are hard to notice until they sit on the weather vane. The behaviour is different from that of those that are simply resting. One could see that it belonged here. After four or five days it was joined by a female and today they have been going together in and out of the garage – a sure sign that they are here to stay. I do hope we can look forward to more. The place can accommodate three pairs or more. Perhaps we should put up a “To Let” notice. One year I noticed a kerfuffle in mid-May when another pair joined the two already established. We’ll see if that repeats itself.

Pond. Mayfly Aquacare, a local fish management company, are coming to net the pond in early May and remove some of the carp. I hope that will give other pond life, including particularly the water-borne insects, a better chance. If successful, I hope to repeat the exercise every year.

Butterflies. I saw my first speckled wood and my small tortoiseshell butterflies this week. That brings my personal tally to six species this year. I have yet to see a green-veined white, which should be here by now.

Deer and rabbits. I watched 54 fallow deer in the Grubbs field on Tuesday, mostly does. This species does ridiculously well, considering the efforts that are made to control the numbers. Each of the females will have a baby in the early summer, so the explosion goes on. It’s much the same with rabbits – there seems to be no limit to the numbers. At Church Farm, some 200 rabbits have been shot in two recent night outings. There are plenty left.

I have been getting lovely emails from appreciative people who enjoy the spring

scene here. Thank you for that. Here’s a flavour:

How lovely it was - the anemones and primroses were amazing, with violets as well and the occasional bluebell. We heard the cuckoo - first time this year for us - and thought how lucky we are to live near such a beautiful place.

Snipe, swallows, lizard, cuckoo and all those butterflies! I thought we lived in a wild-life-rich area, but yours puts it right in the shade. Came across a stoat ... several Brimstones, peacocks, commas, orange tip and a spotted wood ... primroses looking really great and so are the wood anemones,... several buzzards over the visits and they just dive out the sky amazing to watch... a fox just walking around it's the one with all ginger tail ... a knot of grass snakes up on the old railway line ... probably about 9 grass snakes in total around the lake ... the blackbirds were giving a good song along with the robins who out-sung all the others today... found a skin to an adder ... watched approx 40 deer, 9 of which were all male as they had tiny antlers just straight twigs poking out, we haven't seen this many for a long time... thousands of tadpoles in the other pond ... great to know my lizard is back this year and the little mouse living in the old wrens nest.

facebook

www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523

The Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG) is on facebook. You can also become a SWOG blog fan and receive feed from the site when new articles go up.

Dates coming up

Coppice conference in West Sussex

6th – 8th October