

Growing Connections

The West Weald Landscape Partnership Newsletter

The past year has been a challenging time for the Forestry Commission (FC). The 2011 Forests Panel will present its findings in June after which the Government will develop a formal policy for forests and woodlands on both public and private land. Since 2000 the FC has been implementing a programme of ancient and native woodland restoration across England.



photo © Forestry Commission

In partnership with Natural England, we have also been working hard to improve the condition of nationally important wildlife sites; exceeding our 2010 targets a year early.

As the FC Ecologist for the Southern Forest District, I provide a key support role within the Planning and Environment Team for this district, which covers Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey, and parts of Berkshire and West Sussex. It takes in 31,500 ha of the New Forest and South Downs National Parks. In the West Weald Landscape Project (WWLP) area, the FC own and/or manage some 840 ha of Chiddingfold Forest, 500 ha of which is designated as being of national importance for wildlife. We share our boundary with Surrey Wildlife Trust and Woodland Trust nature reserves and have a long-standing management agreement with Butterfly Conservation, who manage part of the Tugley Wood complex. Chiddingfold Forest is managed under the terms of a Forest Design Plan and we look forward to working with the West Weald Landscape Partnership and others on its renewal.

As a founding supporter of the WWLP it has been immensely satisfying to see the project go from strength to strength. The public forest estate has benefited directly from specialist survey work such as the bat studies, a woodpecker hole survey and butterfly surveys, which inform both our long-term planning and day to day management activities. A key strength of the project is its ability to bring together statutory agencies, non-governmental organisations and private landowners all of whom share a passion for the sustainable management of this special landscape. It is with pleasure that I commend this issue of Growing Connections and I look forward to working with the West Weald Landscape Partnership in the years ahead.

Jay Doyle, District Ecologist (Southern Forest District)
Forestry Commission England

New Year - new start, and what better way to start a new year than with a new job. I have been working for Sussex Wildlife Trust for almost four years and have always wanted to make a difference. Working with landowners is an ideal way to do this.



photo © Miles Davies

During my studies I carried out research on arable plant communities and I have a particular interest

in meadows. I look forward to hearing from anyone who would like advice on meadow management or restoration.

I have been in post for a few months now and have been out in the project area getting to know some of the landowners. Thanks to one accommodating landowner I was pleased to arrange a last-minute hedgerow planting, which will provide a fantastic enhancement for wildlife in the west of the area.

Now that Spring has most definitely sprung I will be helping the merry band of volunteers taking part in our woodland survey. I look forward to working with many more landowners over the coming months as we identify where we can best target our support.

Laurie Jackson, Landowner Advisor
West Weald Landscape Partnership

Woodlands for Dormice

There's nothing quite like planting your own woodland; a growing asset that provides habitat for wildlife, a source of firewood, shelter, natural materials and more. And if that's not enough, by planting trees



photo © Jim Jones

you could also help support an iconic endangered species, the hazel dormouse. Farmers and landowners in the West Weald Landscape Project (WWPL) area could benefit from funding and support to create their own wood as part of the Woodland Trust's exciting new MOREwoods for dormice scheme. Run in partnership with the People's Trust for Endangered Species, this scheme aims to help dormice thrive by linking and extending existing woods and hedgerows.

In July, the Woodland Trust and WWLP will be running a joint workshop *Woodlands for Dormice* for landowners to find out more about creating and managing dormouse habitat. It will be held at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum on Tuesday 31 July and will include a site visit to the Sussex Wildlife Trust nature reserve at West Dean Woods, a National Dormouse Monitoring site.

To find out more about MOREwoods for dormice, or to register your interest in attending the workshop, please call 0845 293 5689 or email morewoods@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Ebernoe Common - Wood Pasture and Ancient Woodland

Come and join us at Ebernoe Common on 6th June on a day course to introduce the history, ecology and wildlife of Ebernoe Common.



photo © Sussex Wildlife Trust

Ring 01273 497561 to book.

Pond Surveys

Our programme of wildlife surveys continues this year with surveys on ponds and woodlands undertaken by our enthusiastic and intrepid band of volunteers. In previous years we have surveyed meadows, traditional orchards and hedgerows and the purpose of all of these surveys is to gather baseline information to give us a picture of the state of our wildlife habitats in the West Weald. Are we managing them well? Could we do more?

Our Woodland Survey is already well underway but there's still time to get involved with our Pond Survey. We are running a training day at the Sussex Wildlife Trust headquarters at Woods Mill on Friday 11 May. To find out more or to book a place, contact Petra on 01273 497515.

Lapwings and Nightingales

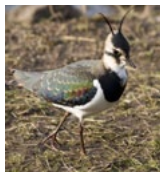


photo © Darin Smith

This year, the RSPB, in partnership with South Downs National Park Authority, is undertaking a survey to establish breeding lapwing numbers on the chalk soils of the South Downs. This information will be used to continue work with farmers and landowners to provide suitable habitat and give lapwings every chance of success. If you see breeding lapwing this spring, we would love to hear from you. Information such as location (grid reference ideally), habitat, number seen and activity can be submitted to SouthDownsLapwing2012@rspb.org.uk or 01273 763555.

On other birding matters, the British Trust for Ornithology is surveying nightingales across the country and asks for records of any hearings or sightings of this iconic species. Please send your records to petrabilings@sussexwt.org.uk or lauriejackson@sussexwt.org.uk.

Dates for the next application rounds of the Farm and Forestry Improvement Scheme and the Rural Community Broadband Fund are due to be announced this spring. Farmers, foresters and horticulturalists can apply for grants up to £25,000 to invest in green projects and new machinery so their businesses can grow in an environmentally friendly way. Grants will cover up to 40% of the total cost of projects in the West Weald area <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/>

Invasive species are an increasing problem on the Arun and Rother, and there are now vast areas of these rivers covered with Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam and other non-native plants. No single landowner is able to tackle the problem because their land is continually infected from seed sources upstream. The first stage in tackling these species is to map their locations and make contact with those who have infestations on their land. Is this you? Please contact Fran Southgate on 01273 497555.

Free Advice

We continue to offer a free advisory service on land management for wildlife, and this year have facilitated a number of successful applications for funding through Environmental Stewardship, England Woodland Grant Scheme and the Woodland Trust's Morewoods Scheme. Please contact Petra (01273 497515) or Laurie (01273 497551) if you would like to arrange a visit.

Parish focus - Petworth

How do you see Petworth if you live outside the town? Antique shops, and a few boutiques? Or a feudal town cowering behind those high walls of Petworth Park? Such judgements come easily, possibly a shade too easily. In 1904, E.V. Lucas could find the spell of the great house 'as present in the very air of the streets as is the presage of a thunderstorm'. A visitor in 1936 found that it rained whenever he came – he was not deterred! 'Tread lightly here, the very air is heavy with memories'. Both writers felt that same 'very air'.

So Petworth is a town of both change and permanence. Some things remain, for example, the medieval field system that peasants ridged and terraced, best seen when the shadows lengthen. However the old allotment ground to the south has been developed and the orchards with their lichen-covered trees are gone. Barry's church spire no longer towers over the outlying fields: it was removed in 1947.

Petworth offers a balance of old and new. The Petworth Cottage Museum recreates the home of Lord Leconfield's seamstress as it was in 1910. Winters seem milder now: Petworth Park lake no longer freezes solid allowing skaters the chance to dance to a gramophone, illuminated by car headlights. Is Petworth feudal? Reserved, I would say. Petworth doesn't throw itself at you but persevere and you'll find a depth you won't find elsewhere. Petworth is unique. **Peter Jerrome, Petworth Society.**



West Weald Landscape Project

A Sussex Wildlife Trust project in partnership with other organisations and supported by the Tubney Charitable Trust

Telephone - 01273 497515 • Email - petrabilings@sussexwt.org.uk • Website - www.WestWeald.org.uk



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