



ASHDOWN FOREST VOLUNTEERS NEWSLETTER

Dear Volunteers.....

Issue 3, autumn 2008

Welcome to issue three of the Volunteers Newsletter. It's difficult to believe that autumn is already upon us - what happened to the summer? Visitor numbers are about 600+ down on last year (Jan to Aug) - so here's hoping we get our Indian Summer!! I do hope you enjoyed the last two issues and thank you for your continued feedback - *Tracy*

Information Barn Volunteers - What's new!

Stuffed Animals - odd question but does anyone have a low suck vacuum cleaner? If so, could I borrow it for an afternoon to clean the animals!! I have taken advice from the Booth Museum and all they need is a very light hoovering (with a cloth over the nozzle) and a light spray with a domestic insecticide. After some research we will not be replacing animals as the cost is too prohibitive (for a deer about £2,000 minimum!)

Winter Opening Hours - This winter we will trial closing the Information Barn at 16.00, I'm sure many of you will find this welcome in the darker winter months.

Exhibitions - the current exhibition will be closing at the end of September. There will be a photographic exhibition but in the mean time could Janet and I have some volunteers to help put up something for the children on migration and hibernation?

Are the Hebridean Sheep Out? - I will try to make sure, if the sheep are out, the icon gets moved to the right place on the map! I have noticed the sheep ends up in some very strange places, including upside down and in the ponds - so please check the board every now and then.

Notice Board - Anne Smith has tidied up the notice board - it's looking so much better - thank you! If there is something you feel is missing please let me know.

The AV Unit - little fingers keep tweaking the sound buttons on the side of the screen and pressing all of the buttons below the screen - please keep your eyes peeled and let me know if you have any problems.

Stock - the stock is looking a little low but some new things such as books will be arriving in time for Fungi Day and in the run up to Christmas. We will re-stock as fully as possible just before the April opening.

What's On!

CONSERVATION GROUP

Last Sunday of the month.
Meet at the Centre car-park at
10.15.

STITCH N' BITCH

Our monthly needlecraft group
meets 1st Tuesday of the month
from 19.00 until we run out of
things to say or do!
Meet at the Forest Centre.

ASHDOWN FOREST WOODTURNERS

The wood turners will be back
again from 18th October
onwards.

FUNGI IDENTIFICATION DAY

Wednesday 29th October
11.00-13.00 & 14.00-16.00.

VOLUNTEERS CHRISTMAS PARTY

Thursday 11 December 7.00 for
7.30; invites will follow soon.

*For up to date information on
what's going on visit our website
or subscribe to the e-mail
service*

www.ashdownforest.org/news





You may not know that Louise Amos (our Shepherd) now has a part time assistant - Veronica Wilson. We also have a new countryside worker Edward Burgin - I'm sure you will join me in welcoming them to the Forest. There are no new volunteers at the moment despite several people having taster days!

MORE TALES OF THE TILL!!

The till suffered a very major breakdown recently (just as a coach load of cubs arrived!) and the emergency engineer was called out. After a very tense hour of twiddling and furrowed brows he declared it 'fixed' but was unable to explain exactly what had gone wrong - something to do with a corrupted memory card (eek!). Its innards were taken away for analysis and the verdict was we might have had a power surge - but it remains a mystery. Anyway, it's been fine ever since.....fingers crossed!



"The WagLog #3" (even more adventures of a Scallywag)

I hope you enjoyed The WagLogs #1 & 2! Well, you'll be pleased to hear that I've made a complete recovery from my stick-induced throat injury. My girlfriend, Corrie, has had her front leg amputated after her terrible car accident last year, but I still love her. She seems to be making a great recovery. I'm a bit worried about my mate Dodger though - he's not himself at all. I think he's had a funny turn. *(Yes he certainly has - he's on pills for his nerves - Ed!)*

You'll also be please to note that I'm a model professional, or should I say a professional model! Yes, two agencies have signed me up for modelling and / or film work, so once 'him indoors' has posted photos of me on the website, I'm sure the offers will come flooding in. I think my stardom is having a positive effect on 'the boss' - he's had a haircut (finally) and has even been seen wearing a tie (can you believe it?).

We were on holiday for a week in July for 'cricket week' - BORING! I don't understand how a game can be so slow, last all day and still end in a draw. I get told off for running onto the pitch and stealing the ball - I'm not allowed to play 'cos my fielding and catching would be too good. I don't even like eating cricket teas - whose idea of a tasty snack is a limp cucumber sandwich? I don't mind licking the cream off the strawberries when no-one's looking though.

Vets again! Almost tore of my dew claw the other day - got it caught on something whilst chasing a ball - really sore. He took me down to Forest Lodge again where some nurse tried to rip my claw clean off with pliers (no anaesthetic). Cruel woman - I'll try to remember to give her a nip next time I see her. I was admirably brave until the third time when I cried for my Dad. (In case you don't know 'Dad' is Rich Allum).

X Scallywag 

SUMMER BBQ

Thankfully the rain held off, the wind dropped and in the end it was a very pleasant evening - it could have been warmer but, hey, never mind! I think everyone, all 60 of us, enjoyed themselves and had plenty to eat and drink! A great big thank you goes out to Janet Wirdnam and Anne Smith for their hard work chopping and stirring on the day and of course to our first class BBQ chefs, Chris and Roger; and Rich the best barman on Ashdown Forest!! Hopefully we can reach the same culinary heights at Christmas!



RANGER HELP NEEDED REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The short ceremony at Airman's Grave has grown considerably over the years so we really need some extra helping hands on Sunday 9th November. Volunteer rangers are needed to help with parking, ensuring the road remains open and safe and to stop the public driving on the Forest. Also, just in case you are asked, there will be no poppy drop this year; this is due to the unavailability of suitable biodegradable poppies. *If you are interested in helping out please contact the office on 01342 823583. THANKS*

Winter work on Ashdown Forest

In mid-September, Forest staff began this year's round of heathland restoration work in the St Johns area. They will spend most of the winter clearing invasive birch and oak scrub which is threatening to overwhelm the heath. Our own staff will be joined by outside contractors who will do the same work in other areas across the Forest. The locations of heathland restoration areas can be found on the website.

If members of the public question the need for tree and scrub removal, it is important to remind them of the wildlife interest of heathland, which will be lost if more woodland is allowed to develop. If they are not convinced by a conservation argument, they may be persuaded that the unique Forest landscape, with wide views across the Weald and Downs, can only be maintained by controlling the spread of invasive birch scrub. The Conservators aim to maintain and protect some 1500 hectares of heathland and woodland.

Chris Marrable

The Ashdown Forest Bird Group



The Group continues to monitor many areas of the Forest, and though we have not yet been able to analyse all the records, a rough estimate indicates that **woodlarks** are increasing in number. There were sixteen records of singing males this year, compared with ten last year. Sadly, the general feeling is that **stonechat** numbers are down. **Dartford warblers** seem to be increasing, as do **yellowhammers**. There were plenty of **chiffchaffs**, though fewer **willow warblers**, **reed buntings**, and **tree pipits**, were noted. **Spotted flycatchers** were few and far between, as always. **Turtle doves** were heard in six areas, with confirmed breeding in one.

Breeding records for **nightjars** are hard to come by - but the Group did arrange two nightjar walks, for the S.O.S., and for the Friends, around the Airstrip. We also covered sixteen other sites, on at least one occasion getting thoroughly soaked! **Woodcock** and **tawny owl** were counted, too.

Highlights this year included two **red kites** over Garden of Eden, a fabulous **wood warbler** singing near the Forest Centre, three **buzzard** families, and a **hobby** pair with two young.

We welcome all your bird news: our website www.ashdownbirdgroup.co.uk gives contact details.

Sue Phillips

Wood Permits 2008-2009

The wood cutting season begins on 1 November and as usual those requiring a wood permit should contact the office with their name, address, telephone number and location. As usual the Chase Ranger will arrange a meeting and show where and what may be cut. A chain-saw will probably be required as will a copy of the public liability section of the household insurance. As usual all wood must be removed from the Forest by March. Wood for non-commoners will be £25.00 this year. Please direct all queries to the office.

Conservation Group

The summer has passed with little activity by the Conservation Group - our end of month meeting dates coinciding with Bank Holidays weekends and, of course, our own holidays too. So, it's time to roll up our sleeves and think of the months ahead. A priority will continue to be the control of rhododendron. Over the last three years we have got on top of it in Tabell Ghyll (about a mile east of here) and finished it off inside the Woodland Garden at Chelwood Vachery. Just outside the Garden, however, we only managed to make a start (but a good one!) last winter and there we'll carry on.

It's not just with hand tools that we've been clearing rhododendron. Our cutting is followed up by treatment that shrivels the leaves and eventually kills the roots. Funding from the Forestry Commission has helped us with this and with the use of contractors to clear the bigger bushes with machinery. Dare I say that the end is in sight for rhododendron? I look forward to seeing you again - 1015 or so in the Centre car park on the last Sunday of each month.

Hew

SCHOOL VISITS TO ASHDOWN FOREST



Earlier this year education on Ashdown Forest was taken on by Sussex Wildlife Trust. The options available are primarily aimed at key stage 1 & 2 children, but can be modified to meet the needs of older groups. So far just over 400 children have visited the Forest on a 'Discovering Ashdown Forest' day where they have enjoyed activities designed to help them appreciate the sounds and sights of the landscape. **Mirror walk** - 'fly' through the woodland, experiencing what it is like to be high in the tree canopy, finding out about how the trees survive and the wildlife they support. **Heathland identification** - looking at the colours within the heathland and learning to identify some common heathland plant species and finding out about basic heathland management. **Trees** - simple methods for estimating the age of a tree. **Journey cards** - looking at contrasting habitats along part of the route. Schools can book the 'Explorer Packs', rucksacks containing items such as sweep nets, parachutes, field guides and art equipment. More information can be found at www.sussexwt.org.uk/education and www.ashdownforest.org/about/forest_centre.php

Forest Centre 'Stitch n Bitch' Group

'Stitch n Bitch' is a craft phenomenon that has taken off all over the globe! There are hundreds of groups in the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe! Craft has become very fashionable amongst the young with the USA leading the way. Just have a look at "Craft Magazine" to see what I mean! Our group meets on the first Tuesday of the month at the Forest Centre at 19.00. Bring along your sewing, knitting, fabric crafts - in fact whatever you are working on - and enjoy a chat with like-minded ladies, learn a new skill and have a cup of tea!

