



ASHDOWN FOREST VOLUNTEERS NEWSLETTER

Dear Volunteers.....

Issue 4, Jan 2009

Happy New Year!! Welcome to issue four of the Volunteers Newsletter. Weather wise - not a brilliant year, surely '09 will be better?! I do hope everyone had a great Christmas and that you are ready to face whatever challenges the New Year throws at us!! Thank you again for all your positive feedback and suggestions - *Tracy*

Information Barn Volunteers - What's new!

Sad news - we have heard the very sad news that Mary Sinden, one of our long standing information volunteers recently passed away after bravely battling a long illness. Our deepest sympathy goes to her family at this sad time. She will be greatly missed by us all.

Stuffed animals and barn cleaning - a happy afternoon was spent with Ann Smith dusting and vacuuming the animals and any bits of the barn we could reach with a long nozzle! It does look much better and we hope someone noticed our efforts!

Opening Hours - Once the clocks change and the evenings become lighter we will go back to our normal closing time of 17.00 rather than dusk.

HLF funded events - There will be a series of events in 2009, 2010 and 2011 financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund. What form these events will take and the dates are being worked out as we go to press. Please keep your eyes on the website, news letters and in the barn for more details.

Website - Have you looked at the website recently? All the information you are likely to need can be found there (and more) - sign up for the announce service and be amongst the first to know about events!

Stock - We will re-stock as fully as possible just before the April opening. If anyone would like till or card training give me a call!

More sad news - most volunteers will have met Wellington, Ros Marriott's black Labrador - sadly Wellie was put to sleep last week. His arthritis had just got to much for him and he could no longer walk. He was a great dog, full of character and vim and much loved. All of us in the office will miss him!

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.

A YEAR THROUGH THE LENS
Will continue into 2009 in an expanded form!

ON THE FOREST FLOOR
An exhibition by Pamela Hurwitz using found objects - opening date tbc.

AN EXHIBITION BY JULIET MURRAY
Prints and watercolours by this popular local artist - opening late July dates tbc

For up to date information on what's going on visit our website or subscribe to the e-mail service
www.ashdownforest.org/news





- ☞ Louise Amos said good-bye to Veronica Wilson recently and a very warm hello to her new assistant Phillip Kidd.
- ☞ There are three new recruits waiting to have volunteer taster days in April and hopefully we can persuade them to stay and join us!

EVEN MORE TALES OF THE TILL!!

The till still has the occasional 'wobbly' moment - a bit like me! Trying to tell it that the VAT rate had changed was rather interesting as there no instructions in the manual, in fact VAT gets just one mention and the 'easy to follow' instructions on changing tax could have been written in hieroglyphs for all the sense they made!! Well, I managed to change something, but who knows what - I am sure a quick chat with an engineer will be enlightening!



"The WagLog #4" (even more adventures of a Scallywag)

Remarkably I have managed to avoid the vets since the last WagLog except for my annual booster injections - phew! That's more than I can say for 'him indoors' who's been to the quacks with another dose of bronchitis - I told him he shouldn't party so hard at his age. They call human vets doctors because they're not as clever or well qualified (except for my friend Ingrid of course).

I was disappointed to miss most of the Christmas Party as my 'mum' came to pick me up before it got into full swing. Luckily she arrived too late to stop me helping myself to a few handily placed crisps & nuts in the information barn. Tracy very kindly put them at the perfect height for me to reach. I'm sorry about the ones I slobbered on, hope you didn't get those ones!

I'm not happy - my now ex-girlfriend Coire is due to have a litter of puppies in March (not mine!). According to some snobs I am not of suitable breeding to sire puppies (also I'm not really able to because I've had 'the snip'). If anyone else calls me a mongrel there'll be a ruckus. I am a cross-breed which is very different you know. A mongrel is a dog of unknown breeding whereas a cross-breed is one whose parents are carefully selected to combine the best traits of each breed, I am a pointer crossed with a lurcher which is why I'm spotty, clever and fast with such hybrid vigour.

Louise's Harry and his son, Chip (Chris Marrable's dog), are going to Crufts this year. Apparently the Kennel Club, whoever they are, do not welcome cross-breeds. Little do they know that I won the Newick dog show last summer, capturing 4 (yes 4!) rosettes.

X Scallywag 

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

This year Ros, with sterling help from Janet and Anne, catered for 70+ - no mean feat in that tiny, not very well equipped kitchen!!! This year the preparations went like clockwork and everywhere was decorated, lit and the mulled wine warmed right on time. As usual the food was wonderful and the atmosphere was great - everyone seemed to be having a really good time. Thanks to Rich for his fun Forest Staff Quiz (how will we be able to top it next year?) and to Hew for his Forest brain teasers. Our thinking caps are now on - how can we make the summer BBQ just that little bit special - you will just have to wait and see!!

Winter work on Ashdown Forest

This winter, the main heathland restoration work is being carried out in the following areas: Priory Road; near the Horder Centre; at Wrens Warren; near to Chestnut Farm and Paddock Farm; at Millbrook; Bell Heath; Chelwood Common and Misbourne. At the time of writing (Jan 2nd), the work at the Horder Centre and Priory Road had been completed! As usual, restoration includes some combination of reduction of invasive scrub and trees, stump removal to allow bracken mowing, gorse coppicing and scraping.

There has been a notable increase in the number of Commoners claiming their estovers this year and in non-Commoners purchasing firewood. This is probably in response to the increased cost of domestic fuel - apparently sales of wood-burning stoves have increased by 40%. This useful workforce gives us the opportunity to begin managing our woodlands in line with the objectives set in the new woodland management plan, completed in 2008. One of the objectives is to create the space for oak and beech trees to develop large crowns by reducing over-crowding by young trees. So-called 'open grown' trees tend to be larger, longer-lived and more stable than trees forced to compete in dense stands. Once it has been adopted by the Board, the woodland management plan will be available on the website.

Unsurprisingly, the wet summer was a poor one for butterflies, with numbers of every species lower than usual. On the other hand, it was apparently a bumper year for cotton grass and over 120 sites were identified. A previously unknown clump of royal fern was discovered in Wrens Warren - it is nice to know that there are still new things to be discovered on the Forest, especially as this fern is 6 foot tall and nearly as wide!

Chris Marrable

The Ashdown Forest Bird Group



It's been a great year for big birds - ravens have been seen regularly, at least three pairs of buzzards have reared young, and red kites have appeared several times.

Spring brought good numbers of chiffchaffs, willow warblers, whitethroats and blackcaps, and a wood warbler - one of our rarest visitors - remained in the Broadstone area for some days. Other migrants included turtle doves, cuckoos, garden warblers and good numbers of redstarts, though sightings of spotted flycatcher and tree pipit were down on the preceding year.

Heathland species such as woodlarks, skylarks and yellowhammers, continued to flourish, whilst stonechat numbers may have declined. Dartford warblers had a very successful year, and are now often seen. Nightjars and woodcocks were displaying over many areas of the Forest in summer, and the occasional barn owl was seen hunting.

It's worth looking for crossbills now - there is a roving flock of these colourful birds. A shower of pine cone debris as they feed may alert you to their presence!

The Group welcomes your bird records - you can contact us via our website: www.ashdown-forest.co.uk. We'll be arranging dawn chorus, spring and nightjar walks in 2009. Do come and join us.

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

Sue Phillips

Conservation Group

It seems like Christmas and the New Year has been a veritable assault course of lurgies and weather extremes on top of the usual stresses of the season. I hope you've survived! Apologies to those of you planning to come out with me on the last Sunday of November: I had to cancel due to a medical emergency. For the rest of the winter months (i.e. until March) we'll return to the rhododendron by Chelwood Vachery. If you haven't been to the Woodland Garden for a while, do take a look at the top two lakes which are now dredged. The bamboo-covered island in the top lake has been restored and the massive silting up of the second lake has gone. The silt was spread over adjoining land and, with impeccable timing, the surrounding trees all then shed their leaves and covered it with a decorative layer. Away from the weekend we're lucky enough to have other conservation volunteers on the Forest. Every Wednesday we get a team from Southview Close Day Service, Crowborough (ESCC Social Services) who are gradually pushing back the wall of rhododendron opposite Broadstone car park. In the autumn we also had groups from Lloyds TSB, the Royal Bank of Scotland, Sussex Army Cadet Force and The National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy in Lingfield. No need to say what they were all doing!

See you soon, Hew



Natura 2000 - Europe's nature for you.

You may be asking what is the new logo that has appeared on the home page? Natura 2000 is an ecological network of protected areas in the territory of the European Union. In May 1992, governments of the European Union adopted legislation designed to protect the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe. This legislation is called the Habitats Directive and complements the Birds Directive adopted in 1979. These two Directives are the basis of the creation of the Natura 2000 network.

The Birds Directive requires the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds. The Habitats Directive similarly requires Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to be designated for other species, and for habitats. Together, SPAs and SACs make up the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

The Natura 2000 network contributes to the "Emerald network" of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) set up under the Bern Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats.

Each EU Member State must compile a list of the best wildlife areas containing the habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. This list must then be submitted to the European Commission, after which an evaluation and selection process on European level will take place in order to become a Natura 2000 site.

Natura 2000 protects 18% of land in the 15 countries that formed the EU before the expansion in 2004.

Natura 2000 - Europe's nature for you. This site is part of the European Natura 2000 Network. It has been designated because it hosts some of Europe's most threatened species and habitats. All 27 countries of the EU are working together through the Natura 2000 network to safeguard Europe's rich and diverse natural heritage for the benefit of all.