Volunteer Groups

Across East and West Sussex, an impressive number of people are regularly turning out with the Trust’s volunteer groups to help the Sussex Wildlife Trust manage its nature reserves. Many of these groups (e.g. those at West Dean Woods, Ebernoe Common and Old Lodge) have been running very successfully for many years and have had a huge impact on the condition of these fantastic places.

More recently, the Trust has successfully established a number of new groups. These include a Saturday Hit Squad, a Wednesday group working on the heathland nature reserves plus a group based on Seaford Head. When the number of people newly involved is added to the volunteers who have recently got involved in one-off projects (e.g. checking Trust vehicles over, inspecting gates and stiles and taking fixed-point photographs), the numbers are truly impressive.

All told, the Trust now has 18 groups working on the nature reserves and is now looking to create a 19th, based at Graffham Common near Midhurst. This group will run at weekends and will be co-ordinated by the Volunteer Reserve Manager, Graham Ault. If you’re interested in volunteering at the Trust’s newest nature reserve, then please do contact Graham direct on: grahamault@btinternet.com.

General Information

* Please help us if you can by taking part in some of the many conservation tasks arranged throughout the year.
* Please always check with the task leader for further information and before a task, to make sure that the arrangements are still as stated.
* All you need to bring are old clothes, suitable footwear, food and drink and plenty of enthusiasm. Tools and training are provided, though for some tasks you may wish to invest in a pair of gardening gloves [not to be worn when using swinging tools such as bill hooks and slashers, as they are more likely to slip from gloved hands]. You are advised to be up to date with your tetanus immunisation.

If you no longer wish to receive this mail-out or are unable to volunteer for the SWT, please could you contact Liz Francis, Volunteer Administrator Tel. 01273 497562 E-mail: lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk.

Above all, have a good time, and thank you for helping us to conserve the wild places of Sussex.
WEST SUSSEX RESERVES WITH PRACTICAL DAYS

Ebernoe Common
SU 975 278 nr. Petworth and Wisborough Green
Almost 200 acres of ancient woodland with glades and ponds plus 200 acres of farmland, much of which is now being grazed as part of the conversion from arable to wood pasture. This reserve seems enchanted with its many diverse species of woodland plants and animals. Delightful in spring with its violets and daffodils and in autumn with fungi. Although grazing has been re-introduced to this ancient wood pasture it is still necessary to control the invasive bracken and holly and keep the glades and rides open for butterflies etc. (Monthly task day usually a Saturday and/or Tuesday)
Contact: Colin Booty 01403 732175
Meet: 10.00 at Ebernoe church (down track signposted church, 1 mile east of A283).

Filsham Reedbed
SU932196 near Midhurst.
We are planning on starting a new volunteer group at our newest nature reserve. This group will run at weekends and will be co-ordinated by the Volunteer Reserve Manager.
Contact: Graham Ault on: grahamault@btinternet.com or Liz Francis on 01273 497562 lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk

Levin Down
SU 887 131 nr. Chichester and Midhurst
A lovely hill of south and east facing downland and mixed scrub including juniper and the very rare chalk heath habitat. Parts of the reserve are carpeted with chalk loving flowers in summer, and the reserve is also good for butterflies such as Brown Argus, Grizzled Skipper and Brown Hairstreak. The management includes clearing scrub - to open up the grassland and provide glades for the butterflies and to keep pathways open. (Twice monthly task day usually a Sunday, Oct - Mar)
Contact: Liz Francis on 01273 497562 or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk
Meet: 10.00am at Charlton Cross Roads. Please ensure that you contact Liz with your details before attending so that Ann Griffiths, the Volunteer Reserve Manager can let you know if the task is going ahead as planned.

West Dean Woods
SU 845 153 nr. Chichester and Midhurst
This is a superb example of an ancient hazel coppice, which is worked in a traditional way by the volunteers, producing hedgelaying rods and stakes, beanpoles etc. The woodland floor is covered in flowers in the spring, and there is a huge colony of daffodils in the north of the reserve. New volunteer input is required here to continue the excellent work started some 30 years ago. (Task days on Mondays except in Summer, and Thursdays all year).
Contact: Richard Ede 01243 773412
Meet: A286 Chichester-Midhurst, at West Dean take minor road opposite The Dean Public House for 2 miles, at reserve sign take track through woodland on right.

Woods Mill
TQ 218 138 nr. Henfield
The headquarters of the Sussex Wildlife Trust and the best educational reserve in the land! Its different habitat types, which include meadow, wetlands, scrub and ancient woodland makes the work varied and interesting.
Contact: This weekly Friday group is often at full capacity but please contact Liz Francis on 01273 497562 or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk if you would like your name to be added to the waiting list.

EAST SUSSEX RESERVES WITH PRACTICAL DAYS

Rye Harbour
TQ 941 189 nr. Rye
Rye Harbour Nature Reserve is fabulous for its wetland and coastal wildlife. Bare shingle, saltmarsh, pasture, open water, reedbeds and willow scrub make for varied habitats and varied tasks to manage them! Weekly work parties are no longer held on a regular basis, but if you wish to volunteer please call 01797 227 784.

Filsham Reedbed
TQ 780088 nr Bexhill and Hastings
One of the largest surviving reedbeds in Sussex is home to many breeding warblers during the summer. The ponds attract many birds in the autumn and winter including Harriers, Bittern and Kingfishers. Tasks include scrub and reed cutting, maintaining paths for visitor access, and keeping the open water areas free from encroaching vegetation. (Monthly task day usually a Saturday)
Contact: Anthony Brown 07933 607926

Flatropers Wood
TQ 863 234 nr. Rye and Northiam
This lovely Wealden wood consists mostly of oak and birch, which used to be managed for timber production. There is a stream and a pond that supports palmate newts. Bracken and trees need to be managed in places to encourage the spread of heather, and the ride edges need to be coppiced, to promote increased diversity of flora and butterflies. (task days usually on Sundays)
Contact: Derek Bates 01424 425538 Meet: 10.00am by the middle entrance on Bixley Lane, Beckley.

Gillham Wood
TQ 716 069 Cooden nr. Bexhill
This 7.9 acre reserve is an oasis within Cooden village. The wood is mainly oak with holly, hazel and the delightful guilder rose. Indicators of the woods age include the prickly butcher’s broom. Keen residents manage the wood as members of the Friends of Gillham Wood. (task day usually the first Saturday of each quarter)
Contact: Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk or contact Alice Parfitt AliceParfitt@sussexwt.org.uk

Malling Down
TQ 423 107 nr. Lewes
This chalk downland area is rich in flowers such as the Common Spotted Orchid and Round Headed Rampion and is a stronghold for the rare Adonis Blue butterfly and Silver Spotted Skipper. It is essential to keep scrub from taking over the shorter and warmer turf that the butterflies and Downland flowers like. (Monthly task day usually a Sunday - February)
Contact: Peter Hodge 01273 812047 Meet: please contact the above for up to date information.

Marline Valley
TQ 783 122 nr. Hastings and Battle
A beautiful mixture of woodlands, streams and meadows. The hornbeam woods produce a riot of colourful flowers in spring, the stream supports many rare mosses and the meadows are excellent for flowers and butterflies. Scrub around the meadow needs to be coppiced, bramble and bracken controlled, and the footpath network needs maintaining. (Monthly task day usually a Sunday)
OLD LODGE TQ 470 305 nr. Crowborough and Forest Row
Part of the Ashdown Forest, work is still needed here to maintain a mixture of pine woodland and heathland. A good site for heathland birds and a wide range of dragonflies. Pine, birch, bracken and gorse need to be controlled on this large area to complement the work done by grazing animals, and some work needs to be done on the many small ponds.
Contact: Martin Wilkinson on 01892 542929 or Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk
Meet: Tuesdays; meet 9:00 opposite the Top Lodge cottages along the Old Lodge private road.

SEAFORD HEAD TV 5043 9807 nr. Seaford and Eastbourne
The Trust currently manages part of Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve and holds a regular task group on the first Thursday of each month to carry out practical conservation in this iconic landscape.
Contact: Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk or Sarah Quantrill sarahquantrill@sussexwt.org.uk
Selwyns Wood TQ 552 205 nr. Heathfield and Uckfield
Much of this mixed woodland used to be chestnut coppice. There is an expanding area of heathland, and a mixture of oak and other trees has been planted to replace dense birch stands. Regular maintenance tasks of path clearance, coppicing, bracken and scrub control to maintain the heather area and removing invasive rhododendron is necessary here.
Contact: Trevor Hince 01435 863364 (please note that this group is currently at full capacity)
Meet: 9.30-12.30 every Thursday: From Cross-in-Hand, turn off B2192 by Methodist church into Fir Grove Road. Reserve ½m on left.

OTHER PRACTICAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Weekly Conservation Hit Squad
We have 3 weekday practical conservation hit squads which provide an opportunity for volunteers who would like to get involved with regular volunteering on our reserves. Each group meets weekly at Woods Mill and spends the day (9am to 5pm approx) travelling as a team in the Trust’s Land Rover to various nature reserves in Sussex. Tasks include scrub clearance, removal of non-native species, grassland management, reed cutting, woodland management, fence repair etc. “Hit Squad” volunteers should be 16 or over and a degree of physical fitness is necessary alongside some interest in wildlife & conservation. The 3 groups are as follows:
- Tuesday hit squad - East Sussex Reserves
- Wednesday hit squad - West Sussex Reserves
- Thursday hit squad - Central Sussex Reserves
If you are looking to volunteer with one of these groups on a regular basis, please contact Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 or lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk to arrange a taster day.

Saturday Conservation Hit Squad
The Trust also runs a Saturday Conservation Hit Squad (approx 9.00am to 4pm). The group is based at Woods Mill, Henfield, and from there the team travels in the Land Rover to various reserves across both East and West Sussex to carry out vital conservation tasks. There is also the option of meeting on site, if you prefer. This is a weekly group; however you don’t need to commit to volunteering every week. Volunteers need to be 16 years or over and have a reasonable level of fitness. If you would like to come and have a taster day, please contact Liz Francis on 01273 497 562 lizfrancis@sussexwt.org.uk or contact Sarah Quantrill sarahquantrill@sussexwt.org.uk

Wednesday Midhurst Conservation Hit Squad (West Sussex Heathland Sites)
The Trust runs a weekly conservation hit squad based in the Midhurst area and would love to hear from volunteers in the local area who would like to get involved. The group, which works in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority, carries out practical conservation tasks on Wednesdays at various heathland sites such as Stedham and Iping Commons, Graffham Common, Amberesham & Heystock Commons and Weavers Down. You don’t have to commit to coming every week, just let the leader know when you’d like to attend. Meet at Midhurst Depot or on site. No experience is necessary, but volunteers should be enthusiastic and have a reasonable level of fitness.
Please contact Jane Willmott on 07557 162406 or janewillmott@sussexwt.org.uk if you would like to try it out or to find out more.

Gatwick Greenspace Partnership
Gatwick Greenspace Partnership is a Living Landscape project that works to benefit people, wildlife and the countryside between Horsham, Crawley, Horley, Reigate and Dorking. If you live in or around the Gatwick Greenspace area you may be interested in volunteering with this project, where there are regular volunteer tasks to carry out rhododendron removal, heathland management, pond work, tree planting, installation of boardwalks and stiles etc.
For more information please contact Kevin Lerwill on 01293 550730 or kevinlerwill@sussexwt.org.uk or look at the website: https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/community-projects/gatwick and download their volunteer task programme. To keep up to date with the work of the Gatwick Greenspace Project, please contact Kevin to request their E-newsletter.

Youth Rangers (16-25 year olds)
The Trust runs youth ranger groups for 16-25 year olds on Wednesdays at Tilgate Park in Crawley and Thursdays at Stanmer Park in Brighton. Tasks include habitat management and maintenance in local greenspaces and nature reserves, planting hedgerows, wildlife gardening, tool use and maintenance, woodworkng and wildlife identification. This is an ideal opportunity for young people who are seeking a career in the countryside. No formal qualifications required but enthusiastic individuals with a keen interest in wildlife and the environment, and a willingness to work outdoors in all weather conditions, are welcomed. Please contact the leader beforehand to check that the day is going ahead as planned.
Crawley Group (Wednesdays – term time): Tom Forward, on 07771 375 254 or tomforward@sussexwt.org.uk
Brighton Group (Thursdays): Huw Morgan, on 07771 375273 or huwmorgan@sussexwt.org.uk
More information can also be found on the website: https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer
# CONSERVATION TASK CALENDAR

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