Signs of spring - Blackcaps and chiffchaffs are out in force singing. Wild daffodils at West Dean woods have made a good show, but bluebells have been slow to come into flower this year, but will be looking good by the end of the month.

Barry Linfield, one of our regular volunteers for Tuesday hit squad for the past twelve years has stepped down from active duties. We would like to thank him, and all our other long-serving volunteers, for their help over the years.

A new volunteer Sunday group at Ditchling Beacon has made a good start with scrub removal and they are trialling the best method for using new tree poppers on steep slopes.

An accidental heathland burn at Iping Common at the end of February, caused by a scrub-burning fire which got out of control, has generated some local and well-publicised concerns. SWT are reviewing the procedures for managing bonfires on the reserves and will ensure that best practice will be followed in the future, especially important at this difficult time of year. Despite the initial visual impact, the outcome of the burn has also been positive, as much of the burnt area will now regenerate with fresh growth and improve the habitat for many years to come.

Looking to volunteer with us? Please check the web site to find out where we are currently look for volunteers to get involved and then register your interest by completing our registration form, specifying which reserve or project you are interested in https://sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/volunteer-registration-form

If you would like an informal chat about what is happening locally and how you could get involved at your local reserve please contact the reserve or project lead listed below.
WEST SUSSEX RESERVES WITH PRACTICAL DAYS

Ebernoe Common GU28 9LD or SU 975 278 near 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 on: 01403 732175
Meet: 10.00 at Ebernoe church (down track signposted church, 1 mile east of A283).

Graffham Common GU28 0PT or SU932196 near Midhurst.
Our newest nature reserve. Graffham Common is a heathland reserve, recently restored from pine plantations. Rare heathland birds have already returned to the site. Work groups focus on scrub removal to protect the re-emerging heathland habitat.
Contact: Jane Willmott on: 07557 162406 or janewillmott@sussexwt.org.uk
Levin Down PO18 0HU or SU 887 131 near 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, volunteers 18 yrs+ only please).
Contact: Volunteer Development Team on: swtvolunteering@sussexwt.org.uk 01273 497 562
Meet: 10.00am at Charlton Cross Roads.

West Dean Woods PO18 0RU or SU 845 153 near 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 every Monday (except in Summer) and Thursdays most of the year).
Contact: Phil King on: pdck@btinternet.com 07701 371198
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 BN5 9SD or TQ 218 138 near 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. This weekly Friday group is often at full capacity.
Contact: Volunteer Development Team on: swtvolunteering@sussexwt.org.uk 01273 497 562

EAST SUSSEX RESERVES WITH PRACTICAL DAYS

Rye Harbour TN31 7TX or TQ 941 189 near 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! There is a wide variety of volunteering opportunities.
Contact: Linda Wren or Andy Dinsdale on 01797 227 784 or rhnoffice@sussexwt.org.uk

Flinsham Reedbed TN36 8DY or TQ 780088 near Bexhill and Hastings
One of the last remaining reedbeds in Sussex is home to many breeding warblers during the summer. The ponds attract many birds in the autumn and winter including Harriers, Bitterns 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 on 07933 607926

Flatropers Wood TN31 6TH or TQ 863 234 near 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. There are two groups, one with monthly task days on a Sunday, and the other with monthly task days on a Friday.
Contact: Derek Bates (Sunday group) on 01424 425538 or Alice Parflit (Friday group) on AliceParflit@sussexwt.org.uk

Gillingham Wood TN39 3BA or TQ 716 069 near 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 guelder rose. Indicators of the woods age include the prickly butcher’s broom. Keen residents manage the wood as members of the Friends of Gillingham Wood. (task day usually the first Saturday of each quarter)
Contact: Alice Parflit on AliceParflit@sussexwt.org.uk

Malling Down BN7 2RU or TQ 423 107 near 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, October - February)
Contact: Peter Hodge on 01273 812047
Meet: Usually the top of Mill Road, Lewes at 10:00 am.
**Marline Valley**  TN38 9NY or TQ 783 122  near 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)

Contact: Owen Johnson  01424 426986 owenjohnsontrees@gmail.com

Meet:  9.45 am. As this is a large reserve with difficult parking, please contact the leader to find each working group. Lifts are available from Hastings Station by prior arrangement.

**Old Lodge**  TN22 3JD or TQ 470 30  near 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

Meet: Tuesdays: 9.00am opposite the Top Lodge cottages along the Old Lodge private road.

**Seaford Head**  BN25 4JQ or TV 5043 9807  near 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: Sarah Quantrill on sarahquantrill@sussexwt.org.uk

**Selwyns Wood**  TN21 OQN or TQ 552 205  near 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 consist of path clearance, coppicing, bracken and scrub control to maintain the heather area and removing invasive rhododendron. Weekly Thursday task day.

Contact: Trevor Hince on 01435 663364

Meet: Thursdays 9.30-12.30. From Cross-in-Hand, turn off B2192 by Methodist church into Fir Grove Road. Reserve ½m on left.

### OTHER PRACTICAL VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

We have a number of practical conservation hit squads which provides an opportunity for volunteers who would like to get involved with regular volunteering on our reserves. Each group meets weekly at Woods Mill or at one of the specified locations.

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 have a degree of physical fitness alongside some interest in wildlife & conservation.

**Weekly Conservation Hit Squads**

We have 3 weekday practical conservation hit squads. Each group usually meets weekly at Woods Mill and travels as a team in the Trust's Land Rover to spends the day (9am to 5pm approx.) at various nature reserves in Sussex. Please contact the Volunteer Development Team to check availability, contact on 01273 497 562 or swtvolunteering@sussexwt.org.uk

The 3 groups are as follows:

- Tuesday hit squad - East Sussex Reserves
- Wednesday hit squad - West Sussex Reserves
- Thursday hit squad - Central Sussex Reserves

**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.

Contact: Sarah Quantrill on 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, Ambersham & He Shay 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. No experience is necessary, but volunteers should be enthusiastic and have a reasonable level of fitness.

Contact Jane Willmott on 07557 162406 janewillmott@sussexwt.org.uk to find out more.

Meet: Midhurst Depot or on site.

**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.

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.

**Brighton Hit Squad** This newly formed group meets once a month on a Saturday morning for practical conservation work on Sussex Wildlife Trust’s reserves within the city but will be working on other greenspace across Brighton and Hove.

Contact: Huw Morgan on huwmorgan@sussexwt.org.uk for dates and to find out more.
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 includes habitat management and maintenance in local greenspaces and nature reserves, planting hedgerows, wildlife gardening, tool use and maintenance, woodworking and wildlife identification. This is an ideal opportunity for young people 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 the day is going ahead as planned.

Contact:
Crawley Group at Tilgate Park (Wednesdays – term time): Tamara Jewell, on 07771 375254 or tamarajewell@sussexwt.org.uk
Brighton Group (Thursdays): Huw Morgan, on 07771 375273 or huwmorgan@sussexwt.org.uk

Further Information:
Please see the following page for the Quarterly Conservation Task Calendar

Please wear old clothes and suitable footwear, bring food and drink and plenty of enthusiasm. Tools, gloves and training are provided, though you may wish to invest in your own gardening gloves. 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 Volunteer Development on 01273 497562 E-mail: swtvolunteering@sussexwt.org.uk

Above all, have a good time, and thank you for helping us to conserve the wild places of Sussex.
# CONSERVATION TASK CALENDAR

## APRIL 2018

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