

# FRIENDS OF ASHENGROUND AND BOLNORE WOODS



CONSERVATION : PROTECTION : ENHANCEMENT : ENJOYMENT

## NEWSLETTER - Spring/Summer 2014

The woods are at last beginning to dry out, but the damage left by the braiding and widening of paths will be long in mending. The daffodils have been glorious, despite the mud, and the bluebells and wood anemones seem to be able to survive being so soggy. Marsh marigolds enjoy it! The picture below also shows some of the pieces of rotting wood that lie in our woods, with all their habitat variety.

Janice has edited our newsletters since 2005, and made them beautiful with her wonderful photographs (a favourite is the tree creeper, below). Sadly she is leaving the area, so we shall lose her special skills. We thank her for all she has done for FOABW, and wish her well in her new enterprise. I am sure we shall keep in touch.

In this edition Janice writes about ivy - gardeners don't like it, but it is a wonderful plant for wildlife! Stuart has the latest on Crest's recent planning application for the final phases of Bolnore Village. Lorraine writes about birds nests, and I will share one of my enthusiasms with you - minute creatures!



## We still need a newsletter Editor!

I have put this together with great difficulty, my technical skills being very inadequate. Thank you to Janice for making my job easier by letting me use some of her lay out!

Unless someone will volunteer to take this on, I'm afraid the next newsletter may just be a double sheet of text. If you can possibly help, please ring me on 01444 415339 Gill Rogers

## Ivy – Benefits and Challenges

Ivy plays a pivotal role in woodland ecology. It has co-existed with our native trees for thousands of years, with ivy being a climber that uses trees for support. It is one of the most valuable resources available to birds and insects. Research published in 2013 confirmed that ivy is particularly important as a source of nectar for bees in autumn and berries for birds in spring. In addition it is an essential food plant for the caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly.



However one of the challenges that ivy presents for woodland (including Ashenground and Bolnore Woods) is that it can smother the crowns of old, moribund trees that don't cast enough shade to suppress its growth, thereby making them more vulnerable to toppling in gales if their root systems are weakened by fungal decay.

Although this process is very much an integral part of the natural cycle of life and death in woodlands, it does present challenges for ancient woodland that welcomes people, particularly in today's focus on creating risk free environments. Sometimes beautiful trees have to be sacrificed in order to manage woodland in a way that makes it safe for visitors.

Janice Tipping

## Plant Galls

I know this may seem a bit obscure, but just now I'm interested in galls! There are hundreds (probably thousands), and some are very familiar - oak apples and robin's pincushion, for example. But almost every pimple, wart or odd shaped blob on almost any part of a plant is likely to be a gall. They are caused by minute wasps, or even more minute mites - and other things like fungi and bacteria. The gall-maker is able to change the plant tissue to provide both food and shelter for the growing young. Sometimes the change is triggered by the first bites taken by the young larvae. The result is distorted buds and leaves, and sometimes reduced yield -as in big bud in blackcurrants.

I have been looking at 'big bud' galls in hazel, which are made by a mite, with an enormously long Latin name for a four legged maggot-like creature which is 0.2mm from head to tail! (they were the young - the adults are bigger!). The buds are enlarged to twice their size and rounded.

Inside the young mites graze on layers of plant tissue, protected on the outside by layers of silky white hairs. Very cosy! Except that often the same gall contains bigger, predatory mites which feed on the grazers. None is visible without a strong lens. A whole ecosystem in a space the size of a pea!



Gill Rogers

## Nesting Birds

Spring has finally arrived and the bird world is brushing up on DIY skills in nest building. The type of nest a bird builds very much depends on the species.

**Platform Nests** are made with larger twigs laid criss cross at the bottom with smaller twigs laid on the top. Rooks, Crows, Magpies and Wood Pigeons build these nests.

**Globe Nests** are built by the male wrens in gaps in walls and banks, or hollows in trees. They use leaves, grass and moss to construct the nest and when the female moves in, she adds the final home comfort by lining it with feathers.

**Cup Shaped Nests** are built by Blackbirds, Robins, Chaffinches and Thrushes. The nests are usually sited in the forks of branches in trees or bushes. Materials are twigs, grass stems, moss, and lichen, lined with mud and softened with feathers. They will also use hair and animal fur, and the *piece de resistance* of this wonderful nest – spider's web. This is used to 'stick' everything in place and also to fix the nest to the branches.

Ingenious!!!

**Cavity Nests** (holes in living or dead trees) are made by Owls, Great Tits, Blue Tits, Coal Tits and Nuthatches. They are lined with grass, moss, lichen and then with feathers. Nuthatches use mud to reduce the size of the entrance/exit hole in the tree.

Woodpeckers are master builders, constructing their nest by making the hole in the chosen tree before lining it ready for the eggs.

**Pouch Nests** are created by long tailed tits with lichen, moss and lined with feathers with an entrance/exit hole at the top. Spider's web silk is used to stick it all together, and the nest is able to expand as the chicks inside grow.

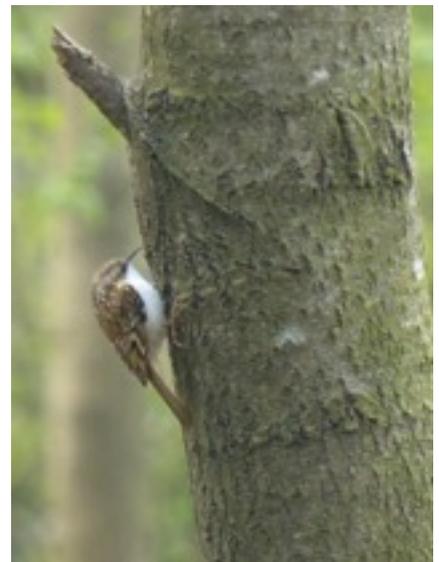
The ever present lice and mite problem in nests is dealt with by the birds in an organic way. They pick herbs, such as lavender, tansy, flower petals and place them in their nests. The bird world version of potpourri to stop them itching.

Lorraine Maynard

### Conservation Management Plans

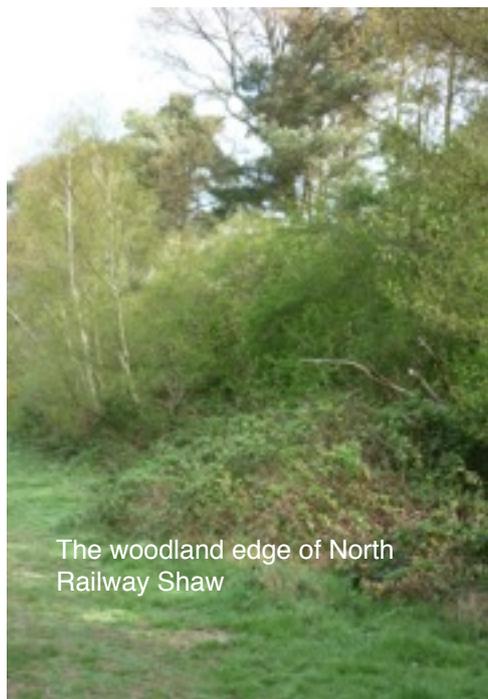
FOABW has a long term plan (20 years), 5 year rolling plans for each wood, and working documents listing winter and summer tasks which direct what we do through the year. These are all on display at the AGM, but if anyone is interested in a closer look, please ring me. Regular Task leaders are Stuart Meier and David Harris, who co-ordinate, and Emma Temple, Chris Marshall, Geraint Morgan and Jim Grinsted. Peter McKerchar and Michael Bradley have agreed to start training for the job! Thank you to all of them, and to others who come and help!

Gill Rogers 01444 415339.



**WARNING: It is an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 to disturb any wild bird while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young.**

## Crest Application for Final Phases of Bolnore Village



The woodland edge of North Railway Shaw

Crest recently applied for approval of details of the expected development on Phase 4b and 5 of Bolnore Village, which they hope to have completed in about 3 years time.

We will be sad to see the loss of these fields, but Crest already have outline approval from the Secretary of State's decision - the decision which helped us save Four Acre Wood in 2008 and led to much improved buffer zones for the Ancient Woodland.

Before the recent application was made, Crest consulted FoABW extensively. This led them to make major changes which ensured the proposals did not break the approved 'Masterplan'. We were also concerned at the loss of part of the field that now forms the woodland edge of Railway Shaw North. We have asked Crest to change the routing of a footpath to run along the roadway, just as it does for example on Cattswood Lane, so saving more space for the woodland.

We have also asked that fine tuning of paths, hedges and other ecological features be subject to planning conditions on which we expect to be consulted

As part of the overall plan, the woods north of the bridleway will soon be transferred to Mid Sussex District Council. We have been pressing Crest because there are finishing works still to be done around the ponds (additional topsoil is required), and extensive pathwork is needed to improve the muddy track at the foot of Railway Shaw South. This is expected to start soon.

Stuart Meier

## Conservation Work and Events

Do join us for **Conservation Work**. We meet each month on the **1st Sunday** (meeting place Ashenground Bridge) 2nd Wednesday (call Stuart for venue on 07711 741947); **3rd Saturday** (meeting place the Thatched Cottage in Bolnore Village). Meeting time is 10.00 a.m. No expertise or tools needed. We will give you a warm welcome. Helpers needed for light and heavier work. There is a refreshment break. (note that dates in July and August are different -see programme)

**Upcoming events are: Photo afternoon with Linda Howard - 24 May 2.30 Ashenground Bridge**  
**A Bat walk with Adam Earl on 28th August**  
**A Date with Owls and John Scrase, on 21 September at 2.00**

See our **Programmes** on the notice boards. Look at our website: [www.foabw.com](http://www.foabw.com)  
And of course don't forget our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/FoABW>

General Information – Contact Gill on 01444 415339  
Birds and other Sightings to Lorraine Maynard 450997 or [lorrainemaynard04@gmail.com](mailto:lorrainemaynard04@gmail.com)

*Published by Friends of Ashenground and Bolnore Woods, c/o Gill Rogers 59 Sussex Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 4ED tel: 01444 415339*