

There's a great deal to look forward to in 2019; the wood has so much to offer and hope you can join us at our events this year, including our annual photography afternoon, bat walk, children's bug hunt and fungi hunt. You are also warmly invited to attend our **AGM at 15.00-17.30 on Sunday 17th March at Ashenground Community Centre**, Southdown Close, Haywards Heath, RH16 4JR. This year's speaker is Jeff Hayden of the Sussex Badger Trust. All are welcome, members and non-members, and we continue to look for more Committee members. If you are interested, please let us know (07802 162275 or email lorrainemaynard04@gmail.com).

The History of the Woods – Part 2: A link for the last 1000 years.

The Bridleway route has remained unchanged for the best part of 1000 years.



Local Residents using the Ashenground Bridleway.

In medieval times, its upkeep came under the 'Hundred courts', which were answerable to the King, hence its name of "the Kinges Highway". The route followed the boundary between lands to the north and east owned by King Edward the Confessor, and those to the south and west owned by his arch rival Earl Godwin (father of King Harold, killed at the Battle of Hastings).

In 1638, it was recorded as 'Half Streete Lane' probably because the responsibility for maintaining it fell to the landowners on each side, who were responsible for half each! The survey in that year said, "*The bounds of the Waste of the manor lands of Hawards Hoth begineth at Half Streete Lane...*"

By the 20th century, the Bridleway had degenerated initially into a narrow farm track then latterly into a narrow footpath, overgrown and with deep mud which made it impenetrable in wet weather. Subsequently it was upgraded as part of Bolnore Village, allowing access to the beautiful woodland of the Ashenground and Bolnore Local Nature Reserve, and the town beyond.

On the 1638 map, the woods are shown in green, and farmed land in yellow ("gold"). The shapes of the woods have changed very little over time. In the last century, much of the land was used for dairy farming with commercial forestry in the wooded areas. Today, the remaining woodland is protected while people live in the clearings between the woods, which follow the same boundaries established a thousand or so years ago.



Stuart Meier

Conservation Update

Apart from some work to restore one of the Ashenground Wood clearings, where we discovered a couple of benches under the brambles, almost all this season's conservation efforts have been directed at Pond Meadow. This has involved a lot of hard graft, manually clearing bramble and small saplings as we have had a series of issues with the mechanical mower we have used in the past. The Committee is now considering purchasing a FoABW mower. We laid more woodchip, courtesy of Mid Sussex District Council, to protect the muddiest stretches of path through the meadow. The woodchip we laid in the summer between Pond Meadow and Four Acre Meadow has held up well so far but will need topping up regularly. Some of our volunteers helped the Trust Conservation Volunteers with de-silting one of the ponds in the autumn. We are very grateful to all our volunteers who give up their time to look after the nature reserve. We marked the end of another busy year with mince pies and a warm festive drink in Pond Meadow.



Patrick Burke

The Sighting of the Shrew

Although mouse-like in some respects, shrews are insectivores more closely related to moles and hedgehogs, rather than to rodents. Shrews are distinguishable by their long-pointed snouts, tiny eyes and small ears. They tend to be solitary creatures constantly searching for food to satisfy their voracious appetites. Having seen evidence over the years of a local population of common shrews in Ashenground Woods, it was an exciting surprise to hear that Network Rail's ecologists had also identified another of mainland Britain's three species of shrews - a water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*) - during pre-drainage work surveys.

The water shrew is Britain's largest shrew. It has short, dense, velvety fur, which is jet black on the upper surface and greyish white/ yellowish underneath. Water shrews are up to 10cm long with tails



up to 7.5 cm long. They weigh in at around 15 grams and live no more than a year and a half. Excellent swimmers, water shrews are typically found living close to water like streams, ponds and reedbeds. They feed on a range of water invertebrates and occasional frogs, newts and fish, which they hunt underwater. Water shrew saliva contains a venom strong enough to immobilise frogs and small fish. However, water shrews can occasionally be found some distance from water, as in the case of the one found in Ashenground Wood, where they feed on land invertebrates such

as earthworms, snails and beetles. According to Sussex Wildlife Trust, intensive surveys showed that water shrews are widespread in Sussex although probably not living at high densities.

Patrick Burke

Take some time to take in your surroundings!

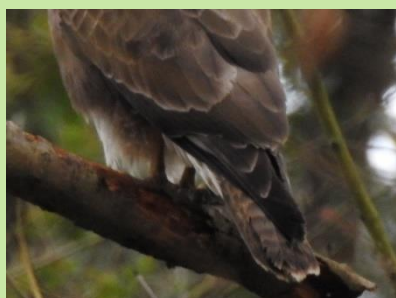
“There’s none so blind as them who can see” how true this saying is! Our little piece of historic woodland is crammed full of beauty and wonder. My last count of bird species was 42, and we also have stoats, rabbits, lizards, newts, mice and some wonderful bugs.

So here are a few pointers to enjoy it more:- Take time to sit for ten minutes. Scan from the bottom up. At your feet you may notice a tiny flower, fungi, lichen you haven’t noticed before and as you carry on up you may see a tree creeper, nut hatch, woodpecker and who knows what you could find at the top! Flora and Fauna is endless!



For example: Sitting in one of my favourite spots (and I have many)

I noticed about 20 feet up a tree a rather strange shaped hole and sure enough, there were hornets going in and out of the hole having made their nest in it. How lovely I thought. A few weeks later to



my utter amazement that hole was host to a rather smug looking squirrel! Goodness knows what he did with the hornets! However, you don’t always get the perfect shot, as the buzzard’s bottom in the photo will tell you. How I missed the rest of him is a complete mystery!

It is up to us to look after the treasures we have, they do not belong to us we are just guardians. So we need to teach our little ones to care for their world. By the age of 2 my grandson could name at least 4

birds, now he’s 4 he thinks he’s Chris Packham! So grab your camera find a log to sit on and start scanning you’ll be amazed what you can see!

Debby Martell.

Marathon Sunday 5th May 2019

The good news is that we have a say in how the course should use the woods to circumvent Network Rail’s works. It is for the race organisers and the Town Council to decide on the course, and I have made two suggestions. I hope we have the answer for the AGM on 17 th March.

The first option is to shorten the course in the woods. From Ashenground Bridge-Beech Hurst-Bridle Way across Trubwick Ave and Renfields-turn right onto Boundary Path-bear left towards Jeremy’s Bridge-via Top Path and exit at Ashenground Bridge. The distance lost would have to be made up using Wood Ride and Haywards Road. That’s doable.

The second option is to keep the Brooklands loop, but to avoid two way running and to cope with traffic, pavement parking on part of Lower Village would have to be restricted or banned: and about 100 meters of path through Pierces Wood should be upgraded. Network Rail should pay for that. And the path would have to be maintained. This option seems to me to be more difficult.

Michael Bradley



Stats of Sightings and Data

Top 3 creatures spotted in last quarters report:

Type	Sightings
Blue Tit	62 + flock
Robin	59
Wren	39

Top 3 Places to Spot Wildlife:

Locations	Sightings
Pond Meadow	186
Railway Path	104
Bridleway	42

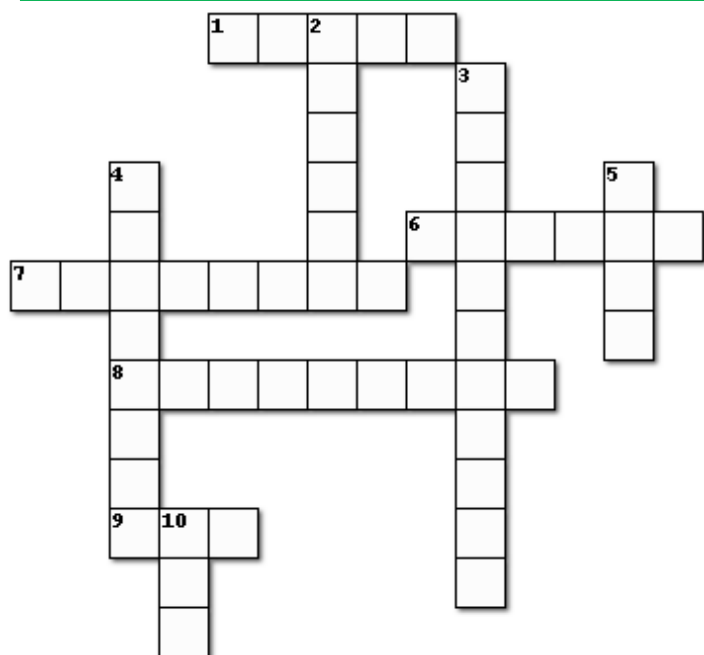
Forthcoming Events

- Photography Afternoon – Date TBC
- Children’s Bug Hunt – 30th June 2019
- Bat Walk – Date TBC
- Fungi Hunt – Date TBC

All children are welcome at all FoABW events and all events are free. Any under 16s must be accompanied by an adult

Photographer of the Month: Debbie Martell - Thanks Debbie for all your fantastic pictures!

Laura Maynard



Woodland Crossword

Across

1. Red breasted feathered friend
6. Grassy area of land
7. Nut collecting mammal
8. Common bird found in the woods
9. Wooden home for creepy crawlies

Down

2. Wooden structure to walk over water
3. Small bat often found in the woods
4. Blue flower that carpets the woodland floor
5. Collection of water
10. Tree that bares acorns

Annual Subscriptions: To join or renew your subscription you can do one of the following:

- Set up a standing order by requesting the appropriate form from Peter McKerchar.
- Send a cheque to 25 Wealden Way, Haywards Heath, RH16 4AF, payable to FoABW.
- Bank transfer to account no. 10021310, sort code 60-10-26, giving your surname as reference.

The Committee is very grateful to those who pay more than the minimum of £5 and paying by standing order reduces our administration costs.