



Friends of Ashenground and Bolnore Woods

Summer 2021

Conservation

-

Protection

-

Enhancement

-

Enjoyment

A report from the Chair:

To say the last 18 months have been a challenge would be an understatement! FoABW tried to keep everyone informed on woodland matters during this time via our Facebook Page and website. Covid-19 restrictions have meant putting a halt to our normal activities and we had to cancel all our events and conservation was severely restricted. The good news is that the volunteers have finally been able to resume their normal schedule.

During the lockdown periods the numbers of people visiting the woods substantially increased. The effect on the woodland of the increased footfall has seen paths double in width as people gave way by stepping off paths to enable safe distancing and a number of unofficial 'paths' were made through the woodland itself. Since the easing of restrictions visitor numbers have decreased and the reduction in footfall has allowed the path edges to slowly recover.

Unfortunately there have been some issues with vandalism over the past few months. You may have noticed the damage to the Great Gate at the railway bridge entrance. The gate was irreparable and sadly had to be scrapped. Mid Sussex County Council (MSDC) have now installed a lockable bollard to the entrance to Ashenground Wood, the gate will not be replaced. Fencing around the South Railway Shaw was damaged for the third time in a year. MSDC have replaced missing bars on the fencing along Cascade Path and replaced the vandalised panel on the side of the stream on the bridleway.



The sightings of wildlife during spring and summer months have been amazing, so many species reported. Reports of red kites, goshawks, summer visiting birds, reptiles and invertebrates. Wildflowers in abundance in and around the meadows, which lead to greater numbers of pollinators reported. For more information and photos of the sightings see The Summer Sighting Report June/July and August 2021 which can be found on our web site under the dropdown heading: Surveys. If you have a sighting to share please email information/photo to lorrainemaynard04@gmail.com



Lorraine Maynard



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Conservation - Protection - Enhancement - Enjoyment

The 18th Annual General Meeting will take place at the **Ashenground Community Centre** on **Sunday 13th March 2022** starting at **3.00pm**. The meeting is open to all, members or non-members, everyone is welcome!

Conservation Activities Report

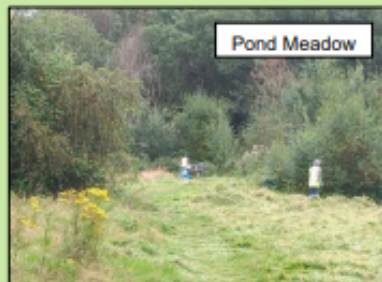
We made progress in delivering the FoABW Conservation Management Plan in 2020/21 despite COVID-19 challenges. The Plan aims to:

- Improve biodiversity by creating a more varied age structure among standard trees in the woodland by means of coppicing and restoring the meadows through a mowing regime.
- Encourage appropriate recreational use of the woods/meadows by creating open places, paths with wide scallops and seats.
- Maintain paths to counter erosion and path-widening, and to discourage the creation of ad hoc paths.



We started to experience COVID-19 impacts in March 2020 (e.g., social distancing and woodchip supply issues). Due to the first national lockdown in March 2020, we suspended conservation sessions April-June 2020. However, this coincided with our switch to our lighter spring/ summer programme.

The government gradually eased restrictions and in July 2020, Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) signalled that we could resume sessions provided that we had a method statement and complied with the 'rule of six'.



We resumed sessions in late July 2020 and made good progress until October 2020, helped by some extra sessions in August. The 'rule of six' limited the number of volunteers per session and we missed several of our previous regulars. October is when we switch to our busier autumn/winter programme

The second lockdown came into force in November 2020 and MSDC asked us to suspend sessions again. The replacement of this lockdown with Tier 2 restrictions from December 2020 enabled us to resume with our method statement and 'rule of six' in place again. However, this was short-lived with the third national lockdown in force from January to June 2021.

Despite these challenges, we successfully completed our priority mowing schedule in the meadows, buffer zones and woodland rides in 2020/21. We have been rewarded by the diversity of wildflowers this past spring and summer. Unfortunately, we had no time to complete any coppicing in 2020/21.

The conservation group resumed in July 2021 and has undertaken two mowing sessions so far. As we move into autumn and winter 2021/22, we hope to complete the mowing and resume some coppicing too. Coppicing is a key part of woodland management, enabling sunlight into the understorey and encouraging biodiversity.

Patrick Burke

Please let us know if you would like to help with the conservation work.



Finances and Pond Work

The current state of our finances is healthy – the audited account for 2020 is available on facebook. We received a most substantial grant from Sussex Lund, a charitable fund administered by the High Weald AONB Partnership, to cover the cost of the work done on pond 1 (the westernmost pond) in Pond Meadow that was undertaken January last year. The Haywards Heath Society also provided a most generous donation when it was sadly wound up.



LUND

A charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin



This year our subscription income has fallen, those usually paying by cheque mistakenly thinking, perhaps, that the Friends had gone into covid dormancy. Whilst running our usual programme of events has not been possible so cutting expenditure, conservation work has continued. I would therefore urge those members who have not paid their 2021 subscription to do so.

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. Paying by standing order or bank transfer makes our administration much easier.

This winter we are hoping to undertake further work on the ponds in Pond Meadow. In particular, pond 3 is in desperate need of desilting and the removal of invasive plant species. We would also like to deepen the wet section of pond 1 and rediscover pond 2. These actions are intended to give a larger body of open water to increase fauna diversity. Although we have been unsuccessful in our bid for a fresh Sussex Lund grant, the underspend from our previous grant can be put towards the works and Mid Sussex District Council have agreed to make up the shortfall.

Peter McKerchar



Kim's Bench

During October 2020 we sadly said goodbye to our friend Kim Berry. Her family and friends donated a beautiful bench in memory of Kim. The bench was made and installed by the Monday Group on the Wiggly Path near Jeremy's Bridge.

www.mondaygroup.org





Do your bit for nature!

Whilst enjoying the beautiful woodland why not get involved with conservation efforts? Everyone can do their bit – 100 tiny gestures are often greater than 1 big one!

Things you could do:

- **Help a wriggly traveller cross the path** – worms, snails, and other critters can often get trodden on, on busy pathways. Gently pick them up, or ideally use a leaf to transport them to safety (in the direction they were facing/heading).



- **Litter picking** – whether its getting on some gloves and taking yourself/kids off to fill a bag of rubbish, or simply picking up one piece while walking through the woods: every piece collected and properly disposed of is one less piece to cause harm to wildlife and the environment. Remember to take your rubbish with you.

- **Protect our bees and flowers** – bees need the flowers to collect pollen, it provides protein and nutrients to the entire colony whilst simultaneously pollinating flowers. Without bees we would be in big trouble so please don't pick the flowers. If you notice a bee on the floor gently **and carefully** use a leaf to transport it to a sunny spot, preferably near pollen, as it may be cold or hungry. Remember to be careful! You don't want to be stung but bees also don't want to sting you as they will die – a little mutual respect goes far!



- **Keep exterior design ideas for your garden** – planting in the woodland can cause devastation to wildlife and vegetation. Native plants can be destroyed by overgrown 'foreign' plants and some species may be harmful or poisonous to wildlife. Leave the landscaping to the experts and enjoy what the woodland has to offer.

Laura Maynard

Forthcoming Events

Due to Covid-19 events have been temporarily postponed. Please keep an eye out on woodland notice boards and Facebook for rebooked events.

When events resume, all children are welcome and all events are **free**.

Any under 16s must be accompanied by an adult.