



GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM newsletter

www.gefweb.org.uk

SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2018

Woking Peregrine Project update, 2018

Text and photographs by James Sellen, the text abbreviated by GEF due to newsletter space limitations

THIS YEAR'S BREEDING SEASON has been very eventful with more drama than an England penalty shoot out. For the the third consecutive year, the same adult pair of peregrines have bred successfully, raising four juveniles (2 males/2 females) but not without drama.

I'm lucky to be able to watch the Woking peregrines most days, as I work at the WWF Living Planet Centre within viewing distance of the nest site on Export House. The adult pair are resident all year but are seen more regularly when the breeding season starts during February.

From early January both adults were seen regularly perched at the north end of Export House, more often in front or near the nest box entrance. On 2nd February a new PTZ (pan/tilt/zoom) camera was installed and Craig Denford, Woking Peregrine Project (WPP) webmaster, fired up the webcams on 6th February. One of the first images from the new PTZ was an awesome view of the adult tiercel perched on the north end stairwell ledge – things were looking very good! I first saw the tiercel (via the nest cam) making a depression in the nest box substrate on 9th February, but it wasn't until 3rd March that copulation was first reported.

Starting the family

March started well when I saw one of the resident adult peregrines give chase to a red kite above Jubilee Square. On 6th March the tiercel (male, the smaller bird) was seen twice taking freshly caught prey to the falcon (female, the larger bird) and both were seen in front of or near the nest box. The PTZ camera gave unique views of the falcon feasting on a moorhen on



One of the juvenile birds flying near Export House

the 12th and at 22.45 she was seen via the nest cam sleeping in the nest box entrance.

There was a false alarm on the 15th when the falcon was seen to be very agitated and showing signs of imminent egg laying. (The tiercel spent much time looking into the nest box.) On March 17th the action began, with the first egg laid at approximately 17.00. The second was shortly before 08.00 on 20th March. Both adults were seen taking turns at incubation during various times of the day. A further three eggs were laid: on 22nd March, on 24th March and on 26th March. Later that day, both the resident adults were seen to chase off a third adult peregrine – impressive team work as each took turns dive-bombing the escaping interloper.

During the first part of April, both adults were taking turns at incubating their five eggs. Then on the 27th one of the eggs started to hatch, By the 28th, three more eggs had hatched. The last egg was reported to have hatched on the 29th but the adults didn't incubate this chick with its siblings. It died later, presumably because it couldn't thermo-regulate its body temperature.

Venturing out

A date was arranged by the Woking B.T.O. qualified ringer to fit the juveniles with their leg rings and this was carried out on the 22nd. By the 29th at least one of the juveniles had started to venture outside the nest box, and on the 30th three had the urge to explore the nearby ledge. This often causes much concern with website viewers but the young ones come prepared with a good set of very sharp talons and no fear of

heights. The last day of the month saw all four juveniles and both adults on the ledge near the nest box – an awesome sight made more memorable when the adult falcon chased off an inquisitive red kite.

Unfortunate accident

On the 10th, one of the juvenile females had a bad landing on a window sill, eight floors up on the west side of Export House. The impact was fortunately heard by two peregrine enthusiasts who were on the top floor of the Peacocks car park. The juvenile was seen to land at the base of Export House, near some ventilation units, and appeared to have difficulty flapping her wings. The observers could see it was in distress and had the good idea of contacting Wildlife Aid who are based in Leatherhead (<https://www.wildlifeaid.org.uk/>). They arrived very quickly and managed to retrieve the young female. Had she stayed where she was, there was a strong possibility she could have been killed by one of the foxes known to scavenge here on prey remains discarded by the peregrines. An update from Wildlife Aid on the 11th advised that the youngster was being assessed and could be in care for up to three weeks. A suspected damaged/broken clavicle bone could either heal by itself if the bird was kept in a temporary cage, or an operation may be needed. As it turned out, confined rest worked wonders, helped by the dedicated staff and volunteers of this excellent Foundation.

On the 18th I was lucky to see two food passes within 10 minutes, from the Peacocks car park, between an adult and one or more juvenile peregrines. This is a privileged view of the adults training their offspring how to catch prey in flight. Awesome!

Wildlife Aid advised that the juvenile would be released from the top floor of the Peacocks car park on the 29th at 10.00. Debbie Hickman (Marketing Communications Officer at Woking Borough Council and volunteer at Wildlife Aid) arranged for 'That's Surrey TV' to cover this unique event (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZowkf_fqb4). Simon Cowell (Wildlife Aid's CEO and founder) arrived and placed a large transportation box on the roof of his car. From a respectful distance, we watched as he slowly opened the door to reveal the back of the young peregrine. It seemed to take a while before she realised freedom was beckoning but when she turned round she shot out, giving an outstanding view of her new-found flight skills. After she flew past the lower floors of Export House she was seen to fly high and fast behind the new buildings being constructed south of the car park. As we watched, she was approached by another



Youngster and adult – a prey-catching lesson

peregrine, possibly one of the resident adults, which made several stoops at the inexperienced youngster. I was a little concerned and knew further observations were needed to try and work out what may be occurring.

On the 4th and 5th of July, I saw what I thought was aggressive behaviour between both adults and one of the juveniles. On the 5th the adult tiercel made several attempts to push the youngster off the ledge near the nest box. When the juvenile eventually flew, the adult tiercel gave chase and it was quickly joined by the adult falcon. She flew past two of the other juveniles, who were circling above Export House, and joined the adult tiercel. Both adults then took turns at stooping at the fleeing juvenile which regularly rolled onto its back showing its talons. Not a good sign. Neither adult was seen to make contact with the juvenile, but appeared to be forcing it lower down until they all disappeared from view slightly north of Jubilee Square.

Further woes

July 18th proved to be very eventful. At 10.30 I had a phone call from Craig – he was photographing a juvenile peregrine on level one/yellow zone of the Peacocks car park and thought I should have a look. When I arrived, the juvenile was trying to feed on the remains of a pigeon in the middle of the car park's access route. Several cars managed to drive around it

before Craig and I persuaded it to fly a very short distance onto a nearby low wall. We picked up the carcass and left it very close to the peregrine. It stayed on the wall and allowed us to get within 5ft. Its plumage was very unkempt and its eyes looked partially closed. It made no attempt to fly and gave the impression that it didn't have the will or energy to move. I phoned Wildlife Aid for advice and they suggested we should catch the juvenile and take it to Leatherhead.

With the help of Martin Pooley, who oversees the management and security of Export House and the neighbouring car parks, and armed with a large box and an old jacket, we cleared the area. While I distracted the bird from the front, Martin approached and dropped the jacket over it. We bundled the youngster into the box. We made some air holes in the box and phoned the Council offices. Debbie Hickman arrived with a colleague and they took the peregrine to Wildlife Aid. It was the same female that had been attacked previously. On the 20th they reported that she was still alive and was being assessed by the Foundation's vet.

Debbie visited Wildlife Aid five days later and learned that the juvenile had sustained another attack,



Leg rings were fitted on 22nd May

most probably from one of the adult peregrines, and suffered two lacerations caused by talons. One was to the neck and the other more serious wound was in the shoulder. An operation had been carried out to stitch the wounds and the vet advised she had no intention of putting her to sleep unless the injuries made no attempt to heal. It seems very unlikely she'll be released back into the wild.

The wider audience

Much of this year's breeding action has been enjoyed by many people viewing the WPP website. From 6th February to the beginning of July, there were a total of 29,080 views from 25 different countries including: UK (26.823 views), USA (490 views), Malta (60 views), Philippines (48 views), Peru (23 views) and Hungary (16 views). The viewing numbers peaked on 30th April = 1,621. A selection of photographs taken this year can also be seen on the website's 'Gallery' page – <http://www.wokingperegrines.com/gallery/>

Many Woking residents said they love having these raptors in town and numerous children mentioned they now have 'Peregrine TV' at school, being shown the live webcam whilst in class!

As with the previous two years, the Woking



Simon Cowell from Wildlife Aid undertook the release of the young female

Peregrine Project has again had the help of many enthusiastic people and generous organisations. On behalf of the WPP group, I would like to pass on our grateful thanks.

A personal addendum by John Bannister

Not being present on site, like James and Craig, GEF has not had much involvement in witnessing activity in the air and on the ground around Export House in 2018. However, we welcomed an invitation to speak to the contractors putting up the two high-rise blocks of flats nearby. One will be 35 storeys high and the other 25, located very close to the station, containing 1, 2, and more bedrooms, purchasing options, and with very restrictive car parking spaces.

Three sessions were organised in one day at the request of Sir Robert McAlpine and their sub-contractors, who wanted to know more about the peregrines on Export House. We went through all aspects of the peregrines in Woking: their physiology, their food, the nest box project, location of the box and its cost, cameras, safeguards, etc. It remains to be seen if the birds will be disturbed by the building of the new high-rise flats. As Guildford bemoans the inevitable loss of Greenbelt with this government, it can't figure out that the only alternative we have is to build high-rise in the urban area. Woking is taking this step.

A DREAM COMBINATION – DRINK AND THE ENVIRONMENT!

An enterprising GEF member has set up a Guildford branch of the "**greendrinks.org**" global community, which is active in over 500 cities worldwide. The group has started meeting at 19.00 in the Britannia pub (near the GBC Millmead offices) on the 4th Tuesday of each month, providing a welcome chance to meet and chat to others in the

Guildford area who are working for/volunteering for or just interested in environmental issues. The July and August get-togethers have come and gone, but we'd be delighted to see you in September (on 25th) or beyond – further dates are on the back page. If you have any queries please contact James at guildfordgreendrinks@outlook.com

HEDGEROW HEROES

Adrian Thompson

BACKGROUND On 6th November last year, GEF were treated to an excellent talk by Jim Jones, who initiated the "Hedgerow Heroes" project on behalf of Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT). He gave a fascinating overview of the history of hedges and their importance in the English countryside. Since then, at least one group of GEF members have attended a course on how to survey our local Surrey hedges.

Do we take our hedges too much for granted? Many of us will fly into Heathrow or Gatwick and the view below us will be quite different from anywhere else in the world. In most seasons we realise that we are nearly back home when we see below us the lush, green patchwork visible beneath us. One key factor in making our countryside so different is the pattern of our English hedgerows.

HISTORY Hedges have long been linked to the enclosure of fields and two of the 76 Laws of Ine (King of Wessex from 688 to 726AD) relate to hedges, demonstrating their importance in English Saxon life. However, they developed only slowly under the Norman manorial and open field systems, but became much more widespread with the enclosures starting in the 13th century and then the parliamentary enclosures of the 18th century. The enclosures were responding to the demands of the lucrative wool industry and the large landowners who largely controlled them. Despite a 50% loss of hedgerows when the maximisation of food production became a priority after WW2, hedgerows remain vital to our countryside.

REASONS FOR KEEPING HEDGES Hedgerows are nature's motorways. Small mammals, insects, butterflies, plants and even birds use hedgerows to travel from one region to another. The hedgerow provides a corridor along which to move, shelter from the elements, safety from predators and a supply of food. Hedgehogs are particularly dependent on our local hedges and very many of us are concerned at their rate of decline in recent years. In times past, hedges were also a source of firewood, and provided shelter from wind, rain and sun for crops, farm animals and people.

Increasingly, hedgerows are valued, too, for their major role in preventing soil loss and reducing pollution, and for their potential to regulate water supply and to reduce flooding. Hedgerows may even have a role to play in taking greenhouse gases out of circulation through carbon storage, if they are allowed to expand in size. Certainly any loss exacerbates climate change to some extent.

HEDGEROW HEROES In Surrey, as in many other counties in England and Wales, the condition of these important habitats is declining through either over-management or, in some cases, through neglect. To address this, Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) is training volunteers to survey, restore and protect Surrey's precious hedgerow networks. Kate Basley of SWT is offering free courses to those who are interested and can help to survey their local hedges. A small group of GEF members went to one of these courses in August and were treated to a couple of hours of theory with great slides and text, followed by a valuable field trip to learn how to complete the survey forms.

Following this, Kate posted us two excellent maps of the hedgerows in our locality, so that we can commence the completion of the detailed survey forms (four pages for each distinct hedge). SWT is prioritising Surrey's Biodiversity

Opportunity Areas (BOAs) such as those in the North Downs. We are very much looking forward to surveying all the hedges in our area over the coming months and to sending in the results to help populate some more of the Surrey hedgerow survey area. The aim is to help identify problems and build a county-wide picture of hedge condition.

As a further part of the project, last winter, Surrey's Hedgerow Heroes volunteers laid some 300 metres of hedging and Kate hopes to expand this level significantly as working groups get more experienced in the techniques involved, which can be summarised as:

- "laying" the hedgerow shrubs, by cutting and laying down the upright stems – bending them in effect, but leaving enough of the stem uncut to keep the stem alive, creating a "living hinge".
- carefully making a long, clean cut down the stem of the plant (the 'pleacher'). This reduces its original rigidity, allowing it to be laid over a 45 degree angle without breaking.
- allowing mature trees to be retained along the full length of the hedge.

Although the principles of hedge laying are simple, it does involve considerable skill to get right.

CONCLUSION GEF strongly supports SWT's Hedgerow Heroes project because the county has such a poor record of the state of Surrey's hedges. We would encourage any reader of this newsletter who is interested in this article to register as a Hedgerow Hero by visiting the website (<https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/what-we-do/wildlife-conservation/hedgerow-heroes>). Kate will then get in contact with further information as to how you can get involved with the project. There is also much useful information on <http://www.hedgelink.org.uk>.



hedgelink.org.uk



New hedge plants being planted from bags

Natural England

Electric and low emission vehicles – looking into the future

Adrian Thompson

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL (SCC) has issued two papers on Low Emission Vehicles in June 2018. The consultation ends on 26th August. Guildford Environmental Forum (GEF) has responded and is broadly supportive of measures being developed to encourage lower emissions from transport in Surrey. GEF has formed a Climate Change Group which has looked in detail at these issues. We also noted that a July 2018 Paper from the Secretary of State for Transport stated that "transport is now the largest sector for UK greenhouse gas emissions (27%), of which road transport accounts for over 90%. Road transport is one of the biggest contributors to poor air quality in some of the UK's towns and cities".

The GEF Climate Change Group therefore welcomed the publication of Guildford Borough Council (GBC)'s initial paper back in Sept 2017 on Electric Vehicles (EVs). We noted that the paper promised that "SCC want to see a co-ordinated network of charging points that will give residents and businesses the confidence to use electric vehicles in Surrey." It also forecast that "We expect a strategy to be in place March 2018".

SCC did indeed release two strategies for consultation in June 2018 and downloads can be found on the link <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/policies-plans-consultations/surrey-transport-plan/surrey-transport-plan-consultations-on-the-plan>. GEF has submitted our full responses to SCC and these can be summarised as follows:

a. Summary

GEF has concluded that we support the replacement of Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles (ICEVs) by Electric Vehicles (EVs) on the following assumptions:

1. The users of EVs should first reduce their dependency on personal motor vehicles and switch wherever possible to walking, cycling and public transport.
2. If a car is needed then it should use as little energy as possible (eg buy a Nissan Leaf rather than a powerful Tesla). GEF would agree that the policy priority should be to replace current large vehicles such as urban public and freight vehicles and to reduce the number of SUV's in the total car fleet. SCC could encourage the purchase of smaller rather than larger vehicles in its transport policy. In this regard GEF welcomed the recent announcement that SCC had agreed to switch the Guildford Park and Ride buses to EVs.
3. The UK's electricity supply will rapidly become increasingly dependent on renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and tidal power (green energy). For example, in the April to June period of 2017, renewable energy from wind, solar and hydropower accounted for 53% of the UK's electricity supply.

b. The SCC Consultation Papers lack urgency

The government may be looking at 2040 but some countries (Norway) and manufacturers (Volvo) are talking about 2025 as a target year. The Strategy Paper by the Secretary of State for Transport entitled "The Road to Zero" has 2025 as a significant target. Climate change impacts will develop apace and, we believe, much faster than is anticipated in the SCC Strategy Papers. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts that gasoline and diesel personal transportation will peak in 2020, by which time some 10% will be gasoline or diesel hybrids and 5% plug-in hybrids with gasoline, and that by 2030 we will have 25% gasoline or diesel hybrids, 15% plug-in hybrids with gasoline and 10% fully electric vehicles. These percentages continue to increase significantly from then on. The pace will be forced by two factors: (i) cost, and (ii) the availability of the necessary infrastructure. It is in the latter area that the promotion of electric vehicles by local Councils becomes an important factor.

c. Health

GEF is very supportive of the concern expressed in the SCC Strategy Papers that ICEVs have a strongly detrimental impact on health in Surrey. GEF believes that the hidden cost of harmful nitrogen oxides (NOX) emissions is not yet fully researched and that the detrimental health factors will, in the future, make the switch to EVs even more pressing.

d. Challenges for EVs

GEF commented on the following:

- Range of vehicles on electric power; this is particularly true for Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs). Many might chance the commute in an urban setting but be much more reluctant to tackle the M25 where the chance of being stuck in traffic and running out of battery power would be stressful. Perhaps 2-car families might go for one BEV and one conventional car?
- Availability, compatibility and cost of charging points; more people will buy electric cars when they can be assured that charging will be easy – this requires that thought be given to establishing an electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Length of time required for charging will be a critical factor in the switch to EVs.
- Cost of vehicle purchase and resale value – the cost of electric vehicles will fall as the number produced rises.
- Reliability of battery especially in winter both for



A domestic wall-mounted charging point, a floor-mounted charging point, and a rapid charging point

initial frosty start-ups and for the extra drawing of power for heating, demisting etc.

- Reluctance to invest in emerging technology, especially at a time of initial rapid development
- Image of electric vehicles – need for celebrity “champions” to popularise them.
- Economics – cost savings will be a critical factor in the faster roll-out of EVs.

e. Opportunities for EV’s

- There is no clear strategy to engage local businesses, although we note that SCC has just announced that it will host a seminar for businesses to discuss how SCC can support businesses to encourage a faster switch to EVs. GEF suggests that the Councils could encourage the installation of charging points in the car parks of local businesses by offering some kind of financial incentive, on condition that those charging points become available to the public in evenings and weekends. This could be a low-cost way to provide many charging points in a short space of time.
- The benefits to air quality are mentioned a number of times but the strategy does not include any practical measures that focus on this. For example, public EV charging points could be focused on areas around schools where there is currently a problem with high levels of air pollution.
- The Councils could seek a funding partnership that still gives it visibility and allows it to demonstrate leadership, as this will engage local people better.
- GEF believes that the promotion of car clubs could be relatively inexpensive and could be significant in speeding up the switch to electric vehicles. Car-pooling should be encouraged to cut down the number of one-driver vehicles on the roads, especially during rush hour. Provision of more buses, and subsidised fares would encourage the switch, since it would reduce the motorist’s travel and parking costs (as well as the human stress of driving in heavy traffic).

f. Existing best practice

GEF notes that the strategies make no mention of drawing on best practice from other UK authorities or indeed other countries, yet there are abundant examples to draw upon to illustrate best practice.

g. Off-peak electricity

The use of off-peak (eg overnight) battery charging will have a beneficial effect on the storage capacity that is needed to overcome the continuing increase in demand for and storage of electric power.

h. Charging points and regular reviews

The Strategy Paper contains good analysis of the factors surrounding charging points, but again without enough urgency. Regular review of the achievement of published targets is needed to ensure that SCC meets the demand from residents and businesses. The Council cannot manage activities without information about their progress.

i. National Grid capacity

Whilst it will be necessary to consult with UK Power Networks as Distribution Network Operator, National Grid have made clear that the roll-out of EVs will not adversely affect the Grid (<https://theenergyst.com/millions-electric-vehicles-sooner-predicted-no-sweat-says-national-grid/>).

j. Dual use street lighting

If dual use street lighting is a feasible solution, then all new developments should have this lighting near the kerb to make vehicle charging easy.

k. Charging points could be combined with renewables, wherever possible, especially solar panels and batteries, to provide the necessary power for fast charging?

l. Consultation with other local authorities

Change should be future-proofed and made as easy as possible for the motorist. SCC should join other local authorities in lobbying for the standardisation of charging technology so that all cars can use all charging

points, akin to the situation with petrol/diesel filling stations in which the nozzle fits any car. Other options may become available and should be considered, eg rather than charging the car battery, the driver could swap an empty one for a full one at a service point.

m. Network infrastructure

The council should seek to ensure that EV charging infrastructure is part of planning policy, not only for new builds but also such that homeowners creating driveways or garages are compelled to install EV charging points as a condition of their planning permission. The Council should ensure that any time that UK Power Networks are upgrading local network infrastructure, particularly in constrained areas of the town such as the Surrey Research Park, that they future-proof their upgrade with provision for EV charging.

n. Charging provision in homes

GEF supports the concept of introducing planning guidance that encourages developers to build charging provision into new homes. GEF would encourage a more proactive approach, which made charging provision an essential element of planning approval.

o. Buses

SCC’s ambition for buses is woefully inadequate, especially as electric buses are manufactured in Surrey. However, we have recently read that SCC is planning for the Guildford Park and Ride Scheme to become a fully electric bus fleet. We welcome this as the start of a much more widespread change in bus fleets across the county. Surrey should aim to be a leader in the provision of electric buses, setting a high bar for other Councils across the country to meet and therefore supporting the growth of local industry. Bus fleets are amongst the highest polluters and some vehicles are 15-20 years old, with the original diesel engines, so anything that can be done to encourage operators to modernise their fleets the better, for health reasons. Until electrification happens, perhaps restrictions can be introduced for both bus and taxi fleets to limit the use of engines while stationary, especially in the winter.

p. Taxis

Taxis should be required to transition to hybrid and/or fully electric vehicles over the short term as a condition of licencing. Electric taxis are a fully proven concept in London (for example, eConnect cars) and there is no reason for the Council not to set ambitious targets in this area.

q. Financial constraints and funding

Funding is frequently stated in the strategy documents as the major constraint on implementation. GEF accepts that SCC and GBC currently have major financial challenges, but would recommend the following ways of overcoming this:

- Funding is available from some charities such as

Sustrans for financial support with new cycle routes and lanes.

- Much greater urgency is needed in working with schools to persuade parents not to drive children to school but to adopt more walking, cycling, public transport (subsidies for children) or car sharing. There is an obvious link between that and making cycling easier and safer.
- An urgent review is needed into bus provision in some areas (too many empty buses on some routes) and more buses to meet peak demand.
- Too little consideration has been given to alternative transport such as walking and cycling and how to build a joined-up network of cycle routes that links villages and towns, and provides safe routes for children to reach local schools and for commuters to reach mainline stations. Historically it has taken months if not years of campaigning for individual cycle routes to be approved, whereas Surrey should be working proactively to introduce cycle routes to schools in particular, and also in other locations where popular driving routes can be replaced with cycling.
- The Strategy Paper was released before the publication of the Secretary of State’s “The Road to Zero” strategy (July 2018), which includes the promise of Government funding (a £400 million Infrastructure Investment Fund is to be launched to help accelerate the charging infrastructure deployment). The SCC strategy needs to be more positive about SCC’s determination to secure funding, whether it is from Government, business, charities or elsewhere and should be amended to incorporate the impact of new Government strategy.
- What attempts have been made to develop public-private funding initiatives? How much would the motorist be required to pay to recoup costs of infrastructure development? Where is the analysis of funding models?
- **Can we afford to ignore these Issues?** What is the cost of NOT doing enough, especially if neighbouring authorities move ahead faster or central government decides to push harder for the removal of petrol/diesel cars?



£1,000 to convert a lamppost

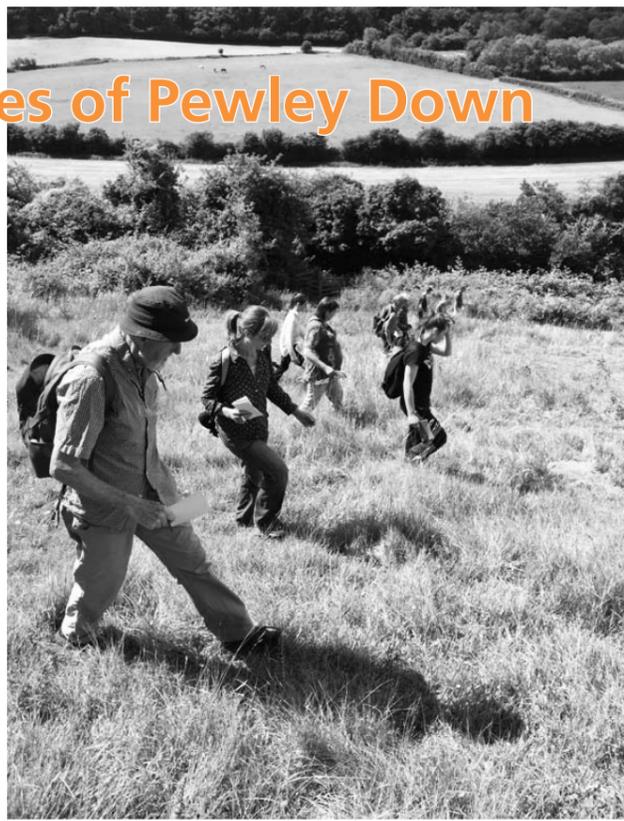
Monitoring the treasures of Pewley Down

Jonathan Mitchell, Chair, Pewley Down Volunteers

SINCE 2003, PEWLEY DOWN VOLUNTEERS have been meeting on the first Saturday of every month to maintain the chalk grassland habitat on the Down. Two highlights of every summer are our counts of **Chalkhill Blue butterflies** and **Pyramidal Orchids**.

Chalkhill Blues are restricted to chalk and limestone grassland. Numbers have fallen nationally with the destruction of calcareous grassland due to agricultural intensification, but populations on many of the remaining sites, where conservation work is undertaken, have remained broadly stable.

In August, if the weather is sunny on Pewley, hundreds of sky-blue males can be seen flying just above the vegetation, searching for females, and during that month's work party, we form a line and count them across the whole site. Numbers fluctuate annually due to a host of factors, especially the current weather and the previous year's breeding outcome. Our counts in 2007-2011 were all under 1,000, but then increased to over 3,000 in each of 2013-2015. This year we recorded 1,514. Taken alone it's difficult



Jonathan Mitchell

to interpret these numbers, but we are very fortunate that one of our volunteers, Peter Curnock has performed weekly



Peter Curnock

butterfly counts since 2005 as part of the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. This involves counting butterflies either side of a fixed transect, and Peter's counts show a very similar profile.

The UKBMS transect data goes back to 1976. The data provides valuable information about national trends, often reported in the national press. An indication of the significance of Pewley is that of an average of 121 sites per annum reporting Chalkhill Blues since 2005, Pewley has had a "top ten count" for the species in eight of those years, and in all the last five years. Which I hope reflects our conservation efforts! It is a testament to Peter's dedication that, in the same period, Pewley is one of only twelve sites with enough weekly data to generate annual indices for Chalkhill Blues for every year.

In July we count Pyramidal Orchids. Numbers also very much reflect the weather. 2018 was striking in



Jonathan Mitchell

that most of the orchids had already flowered and withered and we had our lowest ever count of 151. This compares with counts of 1,000-3,000 in 2003-2008, dropping to hundreds in 2009-2011, then peaking at 1,900-6,000 in 2012-2015, before crashing back to under a thousand. Unfortunately, there is no national monitoring scheme to compare our data with. It may be a coincidence, but the profiles of the two counts are rather similar. However, Chalkhill Blue larvae feed solely on Horseshoe Vetch, and this year we undertook our first survey of the vetch. We've also started trialling a drone to map the vegetation. Continuing these will also help us monitor the extent of Tor Grass, which thrives on the increased levels of nitrogen in the wider environment. Tor Grass encroachment is a problem for most down land sites and much of our effort during the rest of the year is focussed on this. So, if you fancy some brush-cutting, raking, or just good company at a very special site, please do join us!

Swifts

Curved...

And casual they arrive on
May's first friendly wind

Unfettered masters of the sky
Scythe-winged

Dark crescents you'll see them, brimming, almost Out of view Winging
cloudlet cirrus, arcing endless blue

And fey, distant
- still chary of the tiled clay -
Wheel wide horizons hazy at ease in their brief stay

Then, on a sudden urgency
Screaming in spring's ecstasy
At rush around the rooftops play
In tilting, whirling group display

Then mate, lay and with young in attic Stay, till On one August heat
Fledged and feathered quick away

And on that parting, light-winged lift
- a no reluctance southward drift -
To Africa 'fore seasons shift
The dark, falcated, summer swift

Pete Bickford



Swift Project update

John Bannister

SWIFTS ARE DISAPPEARING from most of our skies as their homes (in our homes) are shut off and their insect food is being annihilated. They've declined by 26% just since 1994 and now they are "amber" status birds, threatened and reducing for the same reasons so many species are reducing: the effects of pesticides, loss of habitat and shortage of food. The unforeseen consequences of sealing up our houses to save energy and to mitigate this aspect of climate change, has robbed swifts of places to nest. At the same time the killing of our countryside by agrochemical companies - of which Bayer and Syngenta are the two largest in the world - has

depleted our skies of their insect food. We have to do whatever we can. With the help of advice from Swift Conservation, GEF is putting up swift boxes and spreading the word to other groups who are interested to do something about the awful state of affairs.

GEF has been awarded £1,000 by the Community Foundation for Surrey to install swift nest boxes on existing buildings or, as an alternative, swift bricks in new-build homes. £1,000 is enough for about 50 artificial nests. The response has been encouraging. Our plan is to give these away (in return for a donation) to our members and potential members

Sky high

Swifts streaming across the sky screaming
form, briefly, half a constellation then disperse.

No time to stop, stay, play, no sooner here
than off again, almost colliding, then away;

silhouettes of urgent arrows
aiming at moving targets no one else can see,

their taut wings cutting air to slice
the sky across its widest arc:

over-excited summer visitors,
so drunk on speed that legless,

screeching with hilarity or terror
while sweeping insects cleanly off the blue.

I suspect that I, too, would scream,
if I found myself flying that fast.

Alwyn Marriage



who have seen sswifts about their neighbourhood, and who have a north-facing wall, eaves and no overhanging trees.

One of our members, Martyn Sandford, is involved with the Farncombe Initiative (FI), which is "about improving the environment and building a sense of local community". It works with local councils including Godalming Town Council. We helped Martyn, who is very active in the FI, at a local Fair on the Recreation Ground in Farncombe with a stall and gave away two swift boxes. From there we could see swifts swirling above the church roof nearby. Closer examination showed swifts diving under the roof at gutter level.

We have also formed a close alliance with a group of like-minded people in Farnham. This came about after we took a stall to the Sustainability Fayre back in June and then at the Farnham Green Drinks, at the Hop Blossom pub, where we met a lively group of enthusiastic people. We visited the cottage of Angela Shaw whose roof sweeps down to door height adjacent to three other similar cottages in the midst of fields near Crondall. I estimated 60 or



70 swifts diving constantly at us as we sipped tea and snacked in Angela's small garden. It was unbelievably wonderful and

my aim next year is to get a professional cinematographer friend to try and capture this on film. Three or four swift nest boxes have been ordered by those who attended Angela's impromptu party. For anyone needing help to get up a ladder to fix swift nestboxes we have an offer in Guildford from Neil to do the fitting for £25, which is very reasonable.

Most swifts are now leaving the northern hemisphere to return to their winter feeding grounds in Africa – a journey of many thousands of miles in total and it will be May next year before we see them again. They will not touch ground in that time and will return to the exact place in this country where they were born. They carry nearly all the secrets of their navigation with them.

By the time "our" swifts return I hope there will be at least 50 extra nesting places waiting for them. So far we have installed swift nest boxes at the Royal Grammar School, Holy Trinity Church, and a house in Farncombe, 3 out of 50, but we have another nine months to get ready. Based on swift observations we will concentrate our efforts on five areas: Guildford High Street from the bottom of the Mount to the Upper High Street, Stoke Road area, Shalford around the station, Farncombe around the church, and Bentley and Farnham areas.

But if you think you could provide a home for a swift please get in touch and with your help we will do whatever we can.

GEF's 25th Anniversary Event on 11th October, 2018

All readers of this newsletter are invited to a free "ticket-only" keynote talk by James Smith, former Chair of the Carbon Trust and Shell UK, on the subject

"Can we and will we avoid dangerous climate change?"

James has summarised his talk as follows:

"In the first half of this century, energy production must double to lift people in the developing world out of poverty.

But carbon emissions must be halved and eventually eliminated if we are to avoid dangerous climate change. A wide range of technologies exists to get this done and, broadly speaking, it's affordable.

But the changes needed to the existing energy system are massive. Far too little has been done so far. And it's risky to believe that renewables alone can make enough difference.

The talk will cover what needs to be done and will emphasise the kind of leadership needed to get us on the right path.

The climate doesn't have a reset button and we're close to being out of time. We have one shot to get this right."

The talk will be given in the Council Chamber of the Guildford Borough Council Offices at Millmead, GU2 4BE and will start at 18.30 and finish at 21.00.

To reserve your free place, please rsvp to adrian@lampcottage.net or call on 01483 222687.

They're Coming!

(dedicated to *Apus apus*)

Tie down that honky-tonk piano
Grease that swinging door
Throw fresh sawdust on the boards –
Check out the liquor store –
They're coming!

Card-sharps, sharpen your cards
Law men polish your stars
Keep your women off the side-walk
Fresh paint them fingers to the bars –
They're coming!

Don't credit any feller
That says they ain't, this year.
There's a rumour along the trail
That summat's in the air.
There's signs up in the sky.
The old ones have a knowing look
They ken the reason why –
They're coming!

Riding the clouds
They're coming.
Out of the sun
They'll dive
Hollering like the devil
Bringing this place alive
Scribing new laws of motion
With the speed of a pistol crack
Yelling to lifted faces
'We said that we'd be back!'

Michael Tanner



Guildford Environmental Forum aims to improve the environment in and around Guildford for wildlife and for people and to build a sustainable future.

Join us in our work for the town and have this newsletter posted to your door four times a year. Forum membership costs only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, and new members are warmly welcomed.

Please contact Adrian Thompson on 01483 222687 or email adrian@lampcottage.net



CALENDAR



All the Forum's meetings are open to the public

Saturday/Sunday 6 and 7 October from 10.00am

Apple pressing at the Surrey Hills Wood Fair, Fish Pond Copse (within Cranleigh Showground).

This ninth show has now relocated to Cranleigh and promises to be "bigger and better than ever".

Please see <https://www.surreyhills.org/events/the-surrey-hills-wood-fair-2018/> for directions.

We will have our usual stall and displays, promoting GEF and its mission by turning unwanted/donated apples into a delicious drink and animal feed. Anyone is welcome to bring their apples, which we will convert by manual means into juice, helped by our young assistants supervised by seasoned volunteers.

Please come and support us and experience how turning waste into resource can be fun (especially for children).

Thursday 27th September

Geographical Association of Guildford.

Talk by Professor Klaus Dodds, Professor of Geopolitics at Royal Holloway College:

"A Global Common Question: the Governance and Geopolitics of the Arctic."

1730. Auditorium, Royal Grammar School, Upper High Street, Guildford.

All GEF members are invited.

Thursday 11 October

GEF's 25th Anniversary Event

with keynote talk by James Smith, former Chair of the Carbon Trust and Shell UK:

"Can we and Will we Avoid Dangerous Climate Change?"

1830. Council Chamber, GBC Millmead offices.

(Further details on page 11 overleaf).

Tuesday 20th November

Geographical Association of Guildford.

Talk by Professor Tim Green, Director of the Energy Futures Laboratory, Imperial College:

"Energy Mix and Balancing the Grid."

1730. Auditorium, Royal Grammar School, Upper High Street, Guildford.

All GEF members are invited.

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

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Guildford Environmental Forum's newsletter is published in March, June, September and December.

Please send contributions for the next issue to Clare Windsor by Monday 12 November.

The views expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of its contributors and Guildford Environmental Forum.