



GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

newsletter

March - May 2022

<http://www.guilfordenvironment.org.uk>



Snowdrops by Raymond Smith

AGM Appeal - WE NEED YOU!

GEF has had an excellent year with membership numbers up as a result of a record increase of 72 members so far. We now have 380 members and many of the new members have stepped forward to volunteer in a variety of different ways.

However, there has been little change in recent years in the composition of the Executive Committee, which manages the charity in line with our Constitution. **We are looking for several new members to strengthen and refresh our Governance** by just giving an hour or two a week. Whilst all interested members would be welcome, we are especially looking for help with **the treasurer, membership and marketing roles**. Do come to our AGM on Wed 11th May. Full details are set out on the back page of this newsletter.

The Executive Committee meets quarterly on a weekday evening. Please contact Adrian Thompson on adrian@lampcottage.net or call Adrian on 01483 222687 if you would like to know more about what is involved.

GEF SUBSCRIPTIONS REMINDER

- Adrian Thompson

This is a reminder that (for GEF members who have not joined in the last year) your subscriptions for the year commencing 1st April, 2022 are due on 11th April, 2022. **For all members, the subscription rate is being maintained again (now for over 11 years in succession) at last year's rate of £10pa (£15pa for a household at one address).**

For all those who have completed standing order mandates and gift aid declarations, there is nothing more that you need do to renew your membership and we thank you very much indeed for completing both returns in the past. Your standing order will be processed on the 11th April, as usual.

The new "membermojo" software has been running for a full year now and it will automatically issue a reminder to all members who have not renewed their subscription by the end of March, 2022. For those few members who have not given us an e-mail address and who do not pay by standing order, then they will be posted a subscription reminder with this newsletter. We would be most grateful if your remittance could be returned to me by 31st March, 2022. **Please note that, I can be contacted with any queries on adrian@lampcottage.net or by phone on 01483 222687.**

Finally, if you know of anyone in the Guildford area who would like to become a member of GEF for £10pa, then please encourage them to apply for membership. This is the very best way in which you could help GEF to grow in the future. We hope you are getting very good value for your membership of GEF and thank you for renewing, if that is what you plan to do.

FIVE GOOD REASONS FOR RENEWING YOUR GEF SUBSCRIPTION

COP26 in Glasgow, while achieving some limited successes, showed that The Climate Emergency was now a greater challenge than ever. The loss of biodiversity also continues to worsen although there is an increasing awareness of how both of these challenges have been side-lined by COVID.

1. Thanks to prompt action by a group composed initially of GEF members and supporters, over £1m was raised in just a month last Summer to purchase Pewley Meadows. This 37.5 acre site of rare chalk grassland on the edge of Guildford will now be managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust under a 500 year lease. More information can be found at <https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/news/congratulations-pewley-down-fields-community>.

2. Helen Harris has led the biodiversity group very actively with regular meetings and the following initiatives, which are covered elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Community Hub (a shelter, meeting place, classroom and venue) at Rosamund is moving forward rapidly again, with lots of work completed on site at Longdown Road in the last two months. Over the Winter, a new pond has been created and a sustainable compost loo has also been built.

Membership of Rosamund has more than doubled to nearly 50 members, who are paying an additional membership as well as volunteering.

3. The biodiversity team secured over 500 signatures in Autumn 2021, which led Guildford Borough Council to approve, unanimously, the following "Councillors agreed to work towards making Guildford a pesticide and herbicide free borough at a Full Council Meeting on 7 December. The proposals came after a petition by concerned residents, part of Guildford Environmental Forum together with the national campaign group Pesticide Action Network, requested the Council to make Guildford pesticide-free.

4. In 2021 GEF strongly supported the launch of the ZERO Climate Emergency project in the Centre of Guildford. For further information on all the events at ZERO and the many Community projects, please see <https://www.zerocarbondguildford.org/>.

Funded by member donations, GEF provided the vital initial core funding of £1,250 and a further £1,250 funding on opening. Zero Carbon Guildford is a Community project that shows what can be done to reach out to residents on the climate emergency.

The biodiversity group, led by Helen Harris provided the biodiversity display and map in ZERO to display what can be done locally by volunteers.

5. GEF issues a monthly MailChimp of environmental news and a quarterly newsletter. There are also a range of events and meetings and co-ordinates volunteering opportunities. More on the latter can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

Much more detail of the last year will be available at our AGM at 18.15 on Wed 11th May, 2022, which will be followed by a talk to be given by Sarah-Jane Chimbwandira (CEO of the Surrey Wildlife Trust). If this is of interest, please note this date and time in your diary.

No excuse for not shopping more sustainably in Guildford

by John Bannister



Above - Food for Thought shop front in Guildford



Below - Dry store stock in Solar Sisters

The supermarkets have been promising forever to reduce the amount of plastic they give us, progress has been slow. Admittedly, supermarkets have to convince their suppliers to move away from plastic and suppliers in turn have to convince their marketers to come into line. The fossil fuel industry also needs to provide the right kinds of plastics. Through RECOUP (the UK's leading authority on plastics waste management) this last complicated step has been going on for well over 15 years and still continues.

However, thanks to at least three shops (One long established and two new) we have a real alternative in Guildford. I'm talking about food shopping in the main, nothing gimmicky just fresh, wholesome

food, sold in paper bags and weighed at the till. Just like in my grandfather's grocery set up on his return from WWII; where he made his bags at the counter from sheets of brown paper.

So it is now possible to shop much more sustainably in Guildford. How is this possible? First piece of advice is just stay away as much as possible from supermarkets with all their gimmicks and junk food, and a product range far wider than any reasonable person needs. **Here are my three best buys for food shopping in Guildford**

Food For Thought, at Food For Thought, a long established shop, which is midway between Waitrose and Sainsbury's in Haydon Place you can buy fresh fruit and veg, the best yoghurt in the world from Plaw Hatch a biodynamic demeter farm in West Sussex (far from the oversweet variety you get in Waitrose and Sainsbury's) plus a range of other food and drink. Virtually 100% is organic, so you don't have to go hunting for organic produce. They do have dry foods in plastic packaging such as muesli, nuts, lentils, etc and I am trying to get them to switch to plastic containers so people can fill their own reusable containers. But you'll find no plastic film. Food For Thought also sells wine, health products, supplements and bulk cleaning liquids and even more. Please check them out. Member's of GEF and those in general who want to do the best they can for wildlife, farm animal welfare and the health of their families as well as taking a stand against the routine use of antibiotics and pesticides should always look to consume organic products.

Solar Sisters, a cafe not so much for fresh foods but selling nice fresh cakes and running fantastic events for the young and the not so young. Solar Sisters has just started up, they are at the top of North Street just beyond the Library, and is vying to be the best cafe in Guildford. You'll find comfy chairs, a wheatgrass drink produced on the premises, notices on green events all over Guildford and many different teas, etc. Altogether, a lovely atmosphere is created by two young sisters challenging the tired orthodoxy so prevalent in Guildford.

Finally **ZERO**, like Solar Sisters, sells a range of dry foods and spices dispensed from transparent plastic containers into your own reusable containers. This is another recent startup at the bottom of North Street near the taxi rank. It is a large space on two floors and runs as a charity. If you are a member of GEF then you will know about ZERO as you will be on their mailing list for talks, films and events. They have toilets, a cafe, a cinema, displays, sofas and chairs and sell second hand clothes. ZERO also has a lively website helping you keep up to date. They are an outlet for the GEF newsletter and a range of other local newsletters. A great place for families to stop by with plenty for young children to do and learn, open from 1000 to 1600 seven days a week.

Three very good reasons to start changing your shopping habits and become more environmentally sustainable. These shops are right in the centre of town and, if you don't live within walking distance (2 miles), you have the choices of bike, bus, train or park & ride. On that note I should also mention the new Electric Bike Shop - **Fully Charged** - a short walk away at the town end of Woodbridge Road with bikes for the whole family and even cargo bikes for your shopping so you can tackle two of the highest sources of CO2 emissions in the UK (food and transport) in one go.

Current risk assessment through CC eyes

By Michael Tanner

By now we have a very good idea of the range of situations which CC can effect, the good (if any) and the bad or disastrous.

Of course , on this small planet, we are all affected to some degree by what may happen, even thousands of miles away- not just the awesomely dramatic such as a huge volcanic eruption, collision with a meteor, or a pandemic, not to mention international military conflict.

Some of these possibilities are well beyond our ability to prevent or cope with but some can be foreseen, and coped with, especially on a more local level.

We do not take precautionary measures against severe cold and snow such as are taken , say in Novo Sibirsk or against severe heat as in Saudi Arabia because, although extreme temperatures have been known to afflict even these isles, the occasions have been too rare to justify the heavy cost of constant readiness. That is not to refute however that within the next fifty years even, perfect storms or the severest of droughts might occur in places where there is no record of them. That kind of possibility must merit some consideration, of course, but effectual financing presumably would not be forthcoming.

At least two points are now emerging from these factors: one is the international need to improve the accuracy of long range weather forecasting and the other the urgent regional need to know how a specific locality could cope with the major threats to that locality.

The latter of these points should already be influencing improvements in the intelligent selection of land for the purposes of building , agriculture or forestry; the updating of existing techniques for dealing with water supply, drainage and sewage disposal in low areas- London being a glaring example, where the disposal of sewage at basement levels is a problem already encountered in flooding situations. Even now the disposal of sewage in this small country is not fit for purpose if the impurity of many rivers, lakes and resort sea water is taken into account.

We know how to correct the mistakes we have made with our natural water drainage systems and it is proving less expensive to make effective improvements than it was to straighten natural water courses in the name of shortsighted efficiencies. Retaining or restoring Marshland in some localities is a vital solution to preventing disastrous flash flooding at lower levels.

We can predict how sea levels will rise, how this will affect coastal erosion, how combinations of this and sudden storm wind strengths will put many U.K. populated locations in dire peril.

National Government must work with local government in stating clearly and enforcing and financing the measures to cope with such inevitable threats . Dévelopers need to strictly observe controls right at the outset: quick financial profit for a few has often in the past proved no gain at all for the community or the country.

Local government must know its own territory and work with neighbouring local government. Water especially, of all the elements, does not observe electoral or other human boundaries unless these understand water.

This is true of course of all the elements, as indeed, even technically advanced countries, such as the USA and China have recently had to acknowledge in California or along the Yellow River where fire and/ or flood have devastated forested, populated and agricultural areas.

What are the major risks for our own patch where we have intermittent experience of flooding, extensive heathland fires, and growing difficulty in managing our major infrastructures for water supply, drainage, energy supply , transport , and new housing, for starters.

There is much planning to be done, much execution of what is being planned while the threatening clouds of climate change gather and deliver at their patchily predictable will.

One might be cynical and realistic at the same time. One might be encouraged or dismayed at our response to the Pandemic (a story still being written) . Certainly lessons in organisation and prioritisation have been given and important things learned .

What are the fundamentals in all this? One must be to keep learning ; another to recognize and oppose disinformation — deliberate or simply ignorant; help one’s neighbour (we are in the same boat) locally or internationally; appreciate the much greater plight of many others.

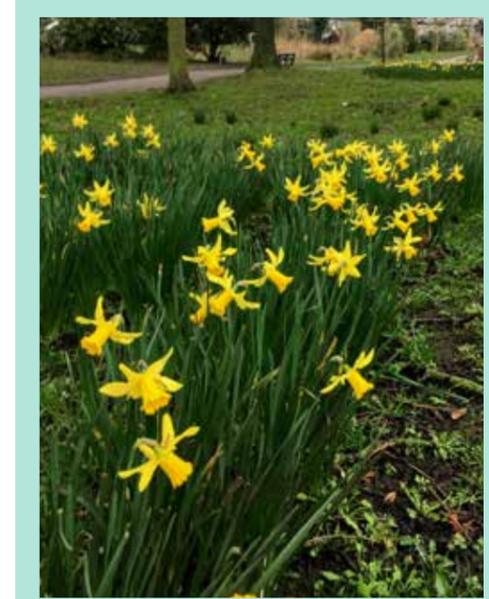
Just how does all this apply to a town of moderate size, in the South East of England which has a flourishing history, is situated on a tributary of the river Thames, suffers chronically from traffic congestion, has been and remains at the mercy of flooding, has a university of rapidly acquired reputation, especially in being at the forefront of research relevant to where we are and where we are going.

Well, Guildford has its environmental Headquarters, a growing number of public spirited experts and, as everywhere in these days of watching that relentless moving clock hand, a constant need for foot soldiers, however small each may consider her or his contribution.

As this goes to press yet another storm in the alphabetical sequence of storms (storm Jorge) strikes parts of Wales and Ireland . Those in Wales most affected have a diminished faith in the ability of their authorities to do anything truly effective. They have come to live with the horrid apprehension of having to put up with flood damage and threat to life. I know this is also true of certain areas in other parts of the UK. Is there any substantial change anywhere that might break what seems an inevitable situation for so many.

And to depress us even further is the ironic possibility that overall wind strengths around the planet may be reducing by 10 % as simultaneously we build more wind turbines.

As a Tommy Handy char lady frequently used to say: “It’s being so cheerful as keeps me going.” So once again we are looking at the Nuclear Power ‘solution’ aren’t we?



Nature in action
Spring is on its way once again. Our mebers have been out and about snapping waking up of the natural world



Sparrow Hawk in flight by Richard Waters

The Queen's Green Canopy

By Adrian Thompson

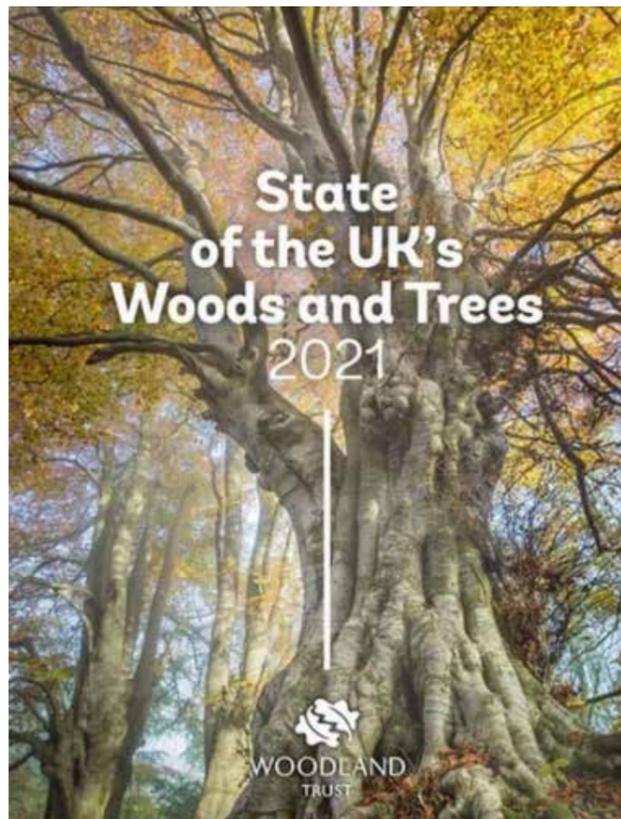


Celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 by being part of The Queen's Green Canopy and other tree and hedge projects.

I count myself as being very fortunate to have been born in Surrey just after the end of WW2. I have lived over 75 years in this beautiful county in relative peace and security and, when work allows, have been able to walk straight out of our door and onto the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Since I was 5 years old our Queen has been setting an example to our country in terms of hard work, dedication and leadership. Sadly, as far as the natural world is concerned, the news has been much less positive. We are only now realising the enormity of the mistakes made in terms of policy and the very heavy price we have paid in terms of the loss of biodiversity.

The first true hedgerows were thought to have been created in the early 1200s when the Law of Enclosure was passed. Throughout the centuries, our unique British hedgerow system grew, with its management fitting in alongside the work of farmers and country workers. Management of hedges would take place in the quieter winter months and included hedge-laying and trimming. Management often occurred on a two or three year cycle which is ideal for the health and growth of the hedge.

The hedgerow system flourished until the end of the Second World War when farmers were encouraged to use whatever space they had to produce food and many of these treasured wildlife habitats were destroyed. Since then, it is thought that about 50% of hedgerows in Britain were lost, along with many country skills used to manage healthy hedgerows, such as hedge-laying and cyclical trimming. This has meant that, of our remaining hedgerows, the majority are not well-managed and therefore in poor condition.



In very recent times, however, the many benefits of hedgerows including the provision of shelter and food, protection from flooding, capturing carbon and connecting and providing habitats are being recognised once again. Grants are now available for hedge planting and protection of existing hedgerows. Trees, woods and wildlife. The Woodland Trust produced an excellent report in 2021 entitled "The State of the UK's Woods and Trees 2021". It is the first report of its kind laying out the facts and trends on the current state of the UK's native woods and trees. The four key findings are listed below (the whole report can be found at <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2021/04/state-of-uk-woods-and-trees-2021/>)

Woodland cover is gradually increasing, but woodland wildlife is decreasing. The trends for the UK's woods and trees are concerning. The UK's woodland cover has more than doubled in the last 100 years, but much of this is non-native trees. Existing native woodlands are isolated, in poor ecological condition and there has been a decline in woodland wildlife. Woods and trees are vital for a healthy, happy society. They lock up carbon to fight climate change, improve our health, wellbeing and education, reduce pollution and flooding, and support

people, wildlife and livestock. Woods and trees are subject to a barrage of coinciding threats. Threats range from direct woodland loss to more insidious influences from climate impacts, imported diseases, invasive plants, mammal browsing and air pollutants. Not nearly enough is being done. The report is a loud and clear warning sign that more needs to be done to protect and expand our woods and trees. We urgently need to scale up the many inspiring initiatives to create native woods, put more individual trees back in the landscape, and restore damaged woods.

However, there is some good news, too. At GEF, we can detect, at last a small increase in awareness of the decline in the biodiversity associated with our hedgerows and woodlands. Both have been neglected for much too long, but there are some reasons for hope! The following is an example of some of the range of local initiatives that are either already happening or are planned for 2022. There are numerous opportunities available for those who are concerned about the future of our local biodiversity.

Surrey Wildlife Trust have restarted their outdoor volunteering. This has included the planting of hedges at West Horsley Place and elsewhere as part of their Hedgerow Heritage project. This is an ambitious National Lottery Heritage funded project that aims to inspire and teach young budding ecologists, practical conservationists and the wider local community to restore, renew and create hedgerows in the North Downs and Surrey Hills. To find out more, please visit <https://www.surreywildlifetrust.org/what-we-do/conservation-projects/hedgerow-heritage>.

The Surrey Hills AONB has also been actively organising tree and hedge planting. An example is Manor Farm, Westcott, which hosted several recent hedge planting events with a view to forming a network of new hedgerows around the farm. The National Trust is actively planting new hedges. At Hatchlands Park, nearly 3,000 native whips have been planted this winter to add to 800 planted last year – see photos below.



Local Councils are actively encouraging the planting of trees and hedges. Projects in local communities can link into longer term projects such as those being promoted by the Queen's Green Canopy project as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. Only a very few trees need be planted before the end of March 2022, but projects like this can then see continued planting over future years.

Zero Carbon Guildford has been launched and is thriving after a huge Community effort and is run entirely by volunteers. Do visit this Community Centre when next in Guildford and look at the Biodiversity section, which highlights many of the best examples of local initiatives. The website for Zero Carbon Guildford can be found at <https://www.zerocarbonguildford.org/>.

The Queen's Green Canopy is a tree planting initiative created to mark our Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. We are all being invited to plant a few trees before the end of March 2022 and then again in the Winter of 2022/23. The Queen's Green Canopy will create a network of individual trees, avenues, copses and whole woodlands in honour of The Queen's service and the legacy she has built. This will create a green legacy of its own, with every tree planted bringing benefits for people, wildlife and climate, now and for the future. The website can be found at <https://queensgreencanopy.org/>.

For further ideas on trees, please see p12 of our newsletter a year ago which can be found at <http://www.guildfordenvironment.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/GEF-Newsletter-March-2021-Email-version-V2.pdf>. We can all get involved, through our local councils and other organisations that are working hard to plant more trees in the right places and reverse some of the damage of past neglect and mistaken policies.

Pewley Meadows saved from development

An update - by David Stokes



Supporters celebrate as they are thanked for saving the Meadows from development

Pewley Meadows, the name given to the fields on the northern slopes adjacent to Pewley Down, (formerly New Warren Farm or Pewley Down Fields), have finally been preserved from development and put under the control of Surrey Wildlife Trust.

The Meadows form part of the chalk grassland along the North Downs and are home to nesting skylarks, Chalkhill Blue butterflies, bumblebees, wild thyme, orchids, and other rare wildlife. Ninety-seven percent of the UK's wildflower meadows have disappeared since 1945, so when this land was put up for sale in April 2021, local conservationists feared that it would also be lost as there had been recent attempts to develop it.

Activists organised a public (zoom) meeting of over a hundred people of whom a dozen volunteered to work as the steering group for a 'Saving Pewley Down Fields' campaign. Social media facilitated frantic messages and meetings, but the task seemed formidable: to raise sufficient money in three weeks to buy a 37.5-acre plot, advertised at a guide price of £800,000, but expected to fetch much more. Recognising that residents could not do this alone, the steering group joined forces with lead donor, Julia Stephenson of the neighbouring Rosamund Meadows, Surrey Wildlife Trust and Holy Trinity Pewley Down School to create a consortium with the common aim of protecting this open space.

With little time to raise the funds and a long list of other

bidders including land bank companies with deep pockets, it still looked a long shot. On 13th May 2021, a nail-biting final auction took place which came down to two bidders: a land bank and Julia Stephenson on behalf of the Saving Pewley Down Group. Julia was able to make the winning offer of over £1.4M, thanks to her personally underwriting the bid and the generous donations of over 200 residents that ensured that the sum over the asking price could be met.

During the summer, the legal process of the purchase became bogged down in the conveyancing logjam and it was not until October 12th that the acquisition was completed.

A celebration was organised on the Meadows in November, and despite the prospect of inclement weather, it was attended by over 200 people who enjoyed a glass (or two) of Pewley Down Vineyard's sparkling wine, generously donated by the vineyard and sponsors, NatureMetrics.

A further few months elapsed before, finally, in January 2022, Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) took on a 500-year lease to manage the area. Pewley Meadows is a significant site in SWT's North Downs nature recovery network and amongst the largest of 50 priority mini-landscapes for nature restoration in Surrey.

Protecting land along strategic wildlife corridors is key

to the national strategy of Wildlife Trusts to protect and connect at least 30 per cent of land for nature's recovery by 2030. There are high hopes for the Meadows as, once restored, chalk downland can become one of the richest habitats for wildlife in Britain, supporting species that are not found anywhere else.

When the community group came together, the vision from the outset was to protect the Meadows from development and create instead an area that nurtures wildlife, offers educational opportunities, and provides additional amenity space for the people of Guildford. This vision is now encapsulated into the terms of reference of the Friends of Pewley Meadows, the group that has grown out of the community effort. With a membership of over 200, the Friends held its inaugural AGM on February 2nd and elected a committee. It will represent community interests in relation to the Meadows and help to ensure they are protected in perpetuity.



The new generation set to benefit from the protected space, with members of the steering group and consortium.

Back row, left to right: David Stokes, Bob Bromham, James Herd (SWT), Alan Schuster-Bruce, Jonathan Mitchell, Tony Hall, John Redpath, Katherine Wilson, Roger Harrington, Ginny Cook. Centre: Julia Stephenson (lead donor), Sarah Jane Chimbwandira (SWT). [Steering group members not in photo: Ros Moss, Kirsty Garvey, Mathew Harwood, Steve Britain]

Rosamund garden and biodiversity updates

- Helen Harris

Volunteers spent a fantastic day last Sunday working together to tackle the hawthorn in the Rosamund Field.

Our 17 acre field is looking great after the winter grazing. The heavy grass thatch has been removed in large areas leaving space and light for the smaller herbaceous perennial plants to thrive. Each meadow ant hill has received a haircut, but with its structure and micro-habitat in-tact thanks to the surprising delicacy of the cattle's grazing.



Volunteers having a well deserved break in the sunshine

17 hard-working volunteers from the Rosamund Community Garden, Surrey Wildlife Trust volunteer network and Butterfly conservation spent 5 hours tackling the encroaching hawthorn using tree poppers, managing to clear a large new area and maintain the area we popped last year as well. It is important to remove the hawthorn, which will otherwise cover and shade out the chalk grassland as it grows, completely changing the habitat which is relied on by rare species such as stonechats, skylarks and small blue butterflies.

Poppers, which remove the root of the plant, preventing regrowth without having to resort to toxic herbicides, are a labour intensive but environmentally sensitive way to remove the young trees. Thank you to everyone who gave their time and muscle power to help us!

We have also started to build the plinth walls for the cobbled sections of the "Hub" eco-shelter in the garden, using local bargate sandstone and traditional hand mixed lime mortar. Watch our GEF updates for upcoming cobbling days and opportunities to come and help with the build.

A word on Floating Pennywort - By Richard Seymour

Invasive non-native plants present many problems to the ecosystems in Britain and Floating Pennywort is a good example of one of these plants. Literature suggests that this aquatic plant was introduced from South America as an ornamental pond plant, but some escaped into waterways in the 1980s and has spread rapidly.

The photograph of Floating Pennywort was taken on the 11th November 2021 downstream of Walsham Lock on the River Wey Navigation near Send and illustrates the the impact of this rapidly growing aquatic plant. Floating Pennywort can grow at the massive rate of 20 cms day or approximately 73 metres a year, and it thrives in still or slow moving freshwater which may be nutrient and mineral rich due to run off from farmland that has been treated with chemical fertilisers.



The aquatic plant is found largely in the waterways of South East England such as the River Thames and its tributaries, however it can be found elsewhere such as in North West England. The impact of this plant on the environment is very significant as it impedes waterflow and causes localised flooding on riparian land. At weirs the aquatic plant can slow the flow of the water and increase levels of siltation on the stream bed. In addition it can outcompete native species as it has a tangled mat like cover which in turn blocks light and results in a reduction in dissolved oxygen levels in the water. It is very difficult to remove and in some locations and due to the weight of the plant, weed boats and mechanical excavators are used to remove the plants. In narrower streams manual removal is necessary and this is very time consuming. The use of aquatic herbicides is probably inappropriate due to the impact on native species living in the aquatic environment and the highly polluted state of many rivers in the UK. Since the Floating Pennywort grows so quickly eradication needs to be done on an annual

basis as it can become established even if small fragments are left in the water. Once on the banks of rivers great care is needed with the disposal of the vegetation as it can easily be transferred from one drainage basin to another.

Floating Pennywort also impacts on the amenity use of waterways and in several places anglers, canoeists and other waterway users have helped to remove this invasive non-native plant. A plant tracker app has been devised so that the public can identify and report the location of Floating Pennywort to the Environment Agency. A biocontrol could be the release of *Listonotus Elongatus* a weevil from Argentina that eats the plant. If approved by the Environment Agency this might be a safe and sustainable control of this invasive plant, but the issue remains what else does the weevil eat? It is estimated that the costs linked to the management and impact on recreation of Floating Pennywort could exceed £25 million a year in Britain.

Sustainable switches for Spring

The days are getting a bit brighter and we're back out and about more so we've put together a list of easy sustainable switches for Spring.

A journey under 2 miles? Walk don't drive - an oldie but a goldie - In the winter time we all want to hop in our car for those short journies. Make the most of the better weather and swap your car for your feet on all journies under 2 miles

Heading for a day out? add a fork, straw and bowl to your re-usable waterbottle and coffee cup - get yourself a reusable a fork, straw and

bowl (or maybe a box) so you can enjoy lunch, coffee and snacks on the go free single use items.

Go-wild! switch up a corner of your garden and return it to nature. Leave it to become overgrown and uncultivated. These wild patches are fantastic for promoting biodiversity and providing a range a habitats.

Give back on a day off - Spring brings with it a host of environmental volunteering options. Maybe join our Rosamund gardeners for a volunteering day - see page 9 for more details

Why switch to organic coffee?

After oil, coffee is the world's most traded commodity. Globally we consume over 2 billion cups of coffee a day and growing coffee is the livelihood for more than 100 million people around the world. Yet for Britain, for most of the 20th century, our hot drink of choice was tea. While tea is still popular in the UK to drink at home, the dawn of Starbucks and coffee culture has led to coffee eclipsing tea as the consumers' drink of choice when out

China's coffee boom

Global demand continues in an upward direction and is set to double by 2050 — in large part driven by the growing number of Chinese consumers. Across China, Starbucks continues to open new stores daily, aiming to reach 6000 stores by 2022. With the middle class set to approach 600 million in the next 2 years, it's the perfect marketplace for global coffee chains.

Good for business, bad for the environment

But while it may be good news for multinationals, the coffee boom is causing environmental problems to mount up. First came milky lattes and cappuccinos in single use coffee cups then luxury-coffee-at-home machines and single use capsules. What might be a micro-luxury for the consumer, is a macro-disaster for the environment. The cultivation of the bean itself is also causing problems.

Thirsty plants

While cultivation of any cash crop has serious ecological consequences, tea is a much less thirsty plant than coffee. The amount of water needed for one cup of tea is around 30 litres, compared to 140 for a cup of coffee. Coffee is often drunk in a milk-heavy formula, which adds significantly to the carbon footprint of the drink. One study estimated that black coffee produces 21 grams of CO2; while a latte, 340 grams.

How coffee is grown: Shade grown

Coffee grows naturally in biodiverse tropical or sub-tropical mountainous regions, among partial shade afforded by the surrounding vegetation. Because of the shade, the bean matures more slowly than its sun grown counterpart, and results in a better flavour. Shade grown coffee usually has a higher price tag. This reflects the higher labour costs involved in applying organic fertilizers and weeding by hand, and typically the lower yield of the plants.

How coffee is grown: Sun grown

Sun grown coffee is usually grown on areas that have been deforested resulting in a loss of biodiversity and habitat for many species and removal of natural carbon sinks. While this type of planting can make sense economically because of higher yields, and quicker and easier harvest, intensively cultivating coffee leads to soil erosion and blights. These blights are then treated with pesticides which run off into the surrounding ecosystem and water ways.

How local people are affected by sun grown coffee cultivation

The high levels of herbicides and pesticides sprayed during the cultivation exposes workers to toxins and upsetting the natural equilibrium of nature also has a knock on effect for the people that live nearby. This occurs not only because of the toxic runoff polluting the water, but also because the natural soil structure is upset by the removal of trees and their root systems.

Even though there are clear benefits to shade growing coffee cultivation for the environment, most coffee is still sun grown – 40% of the global supply. This is mainly because farmers are looking to maximize their yields in the shortest time possible and is part of a wider trend which over the past 50 years has pushed suppliers to produce high quantity at low cost to meet growing consumer demand.

How has the warming climate affecting coffee?

The warming climate has also added to the trouble coffee growers face. Sun grown coffee is often lost to rust blights. Climate change is also causing rain to be more infrequent which affects yields. Some areas are becoming too hot to grow coffee and therefore face a loss of livelihood: about half the world's coffee-producing land is expected to be unsuitable by 2050, according to a report from the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

With increasingly difficult growing conditions, many growers are transitioning back to shade grown cultivation which encourages biodiversity and the integration of agroforestry practices. The extra shade from the mix of foliage helps keep the plants cooler in a warmer climate and the better soil structure retains water much better, building resilience for dry periods. While part of solving the ecological crisis will mean that we all must consume less, the global love of coffee could be a catalyst for more positive growing practices.

How to support sustainable coffee practices

Mostly the big coffee shop chains don't rank well when it comes to ethics so where possible seek out independent coffee houses that serve organic coffee,. Charities like the Rainforest Alliance work to support shade grown coffee. Look out for their symbol on products you buy. For coffee, Grumpy Mule are Rainforest Alliance certified.

Want to read more of Caroline's work? check out her blog at www.regreentheplanet.blog

GUILDFORD ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM

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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 or emailed to you four times a year. Forum membership is only £10 per year or £15 for a couple, while for age 21-25 it's £5 and for under 21s it's free. 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.



Wednesday 11th May - 18.15 to 21.00 - Guildford Environmental Forum AGM

followed by

What next for Biodiversity in Surrey? (Starting at 19.15)

The CEO of Surrey Wildlife Trust and also director and co-founder of the Surrey Nature Partnership and a Trustee for the Surrey Hills Society, Sarah Jane Chimbwandira, will be talking to GEF members at our AGM:

We are living through the sixth mass extinction right now, with over 50% of our bio abundance lost and up to 40% of our species threatened. The UK has one of the lowest biodiversity scores in Europe. What can we do to fix this?

Sarah Jane Chimbwandira, will lead an interactive session on the future of nature and conservation in Surrey.

What makes an effective conservation strategy?

What is a Nature Recovery Network and how can we better manage our landscapes?

How can we balance the needs of people and the rest of nature?

What do we need from our leaders?

what role can each one of us who cares about Surrey's wildlife play?

Come and ask your questions and share your thoughts with other GEF members.

Location – Zero Carbon Guildford's ZERO Centre, 14-16, Friary Street, Guildford, GU1 4EH.

Guildford Environmental Forum's newsletter is published in March, June, September and December. Please send contributions for the next issue to Ellie Morgan (details above) by 9th May 2022.

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