

# Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group



## Newsletter

*Summer 2015  
Volume 8 No 2*



*Photo © 2015 Sarah Hughes*

## Management Matters

Have you visited your Members Only section of the website yet? If not, I urge you to do so and to take a look at the Volunteer Policy. It has been produced for all members who volunteer for the group, in any way. Inside, you will find what you should expect from MWHG and what MWHG expects from you while volunteering. Importantly, it also sets out the procedures to follow if you have a complaint or if things go wrong in some way. We don't want to drown you in paperwork but documents such as this are vital if problems do arise. Remember, it is there because we value you and your contribution so much.

As I have mentioned previously, the group is developing its presence on Facebook, thanks to Nicola Timney. I hope that some of you will have attended her training by the time you read this. The Management Team believe that making the most of social media is vital if we are to reach a wider audience and encourage more people to take action for wildlife. With an election that saw little mention of the environment or conservation by any of the major parties, it has never been more important to get people engaged.

I always try to watch as much of BBC Springwatch as time allows. Every year it reminds me of the importance of what we do and that we should congratulate ourselves for our efforts. So, give yourself a huge pat on the back or open a bottle of wine and feel good about yourself.

*Joe Savill*

### **IMPORTANT DIARY DATE**

**The MWHG Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, 12 November 2015 at 7.30pm at Selsey Town Hall. Speaker to be advised.**



*Photo © 2015 Peter White*

## SWALK

Bill Martin reports that the booklet 'Walks around Sidlesham' has been reprinted for a third time and now reflects the change in venues' names, namely the Grey Stag and the Boat House at Chichester Marina.

If you would like to buy a copy email us at [newsletter@mwhg.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@mwhg.org.uk)

# COMMUNITY WILDLIFE PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

Springtime has been awesome, with its amazing explosion of colour, bud burst, growth and wildlife activity. What a transformation! Winter seems such a long time away and summer is just around the corner.



*Photo © 2015 Sarah Hughes*

I have been working closely with Sustrans (a leading charity enabling people to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys) with 'Cycle Safaris' for local junior schools. This is following on from last year's success of our first 'Cycle Safari' event, starting at Roussillon Park, lunch at the Bull's Head in Fishbourne and via Centurion Way, the disused 'Chichester to Midhurst' Railway line - due to development pressures a very important wildlife corridor. Working with Parklands Primary School and all on bikes, we led a class up Centurion Way with several stops to look at the local flora and fauna. I did manage to bring a few skulls, barn owl pellets and other interesting gems for the young people to view. It was a fantastic afternoon and a pleasure to work with the school, staff and students, whose knowledge and enthusiasm is worth all the paperwork and procedures.



*Photo © 2015 Sarah Hughes*

Also in Chichester we led a guided walk from Graylingwell to the East of Chichester and back again via East Lavant. We took the route up Madgwick Lane (which was slightly scary with the fast moving traffic) and then the 'right of way' around Goodwood Motor Circuit, another wildlife corridor, which will become more important as more green space is being lost. The hedgerow contains elder *Sambucus nigra*; oak *Quercus robur*; hazel *Corylus avellana*; sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*; ash *Fraxinus excelsior*; bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, and much more. It is a corridor rich in biodiversity- butterflies, birds, insects and plants.

In the Southbourne area work continues within Southbourne Junior School. We had an amazing session of 'Biodiversity Mapping in the school grounds', which enabled us to complete a hedgerow survey and take note of the importance of trees and wild areas which link wildlife together. We were very fortunate to find a Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara* sunning itself within a compost area surrounded by nettles. I find it inspiring to work with the students, whose knowledge and understanding of wildlife is positive and refreshing.



At Tuppenny Barn work still continues to finish reinstating the pond. We are working on softening the edges with marginal planting etc. We were very fortunate to have the Willow Work training session and special thanks go to Two Circle Design, Mark and Rebecca Ford.

In the Fishbourne area all of the Recreational Disturbance season signs have been removed until the winter and work/meetings continues with the Fishbourne Fun Family Dog Show. We have a great working relationship with Chichester Harbour Conservancy and I look forward to this partnership continuing.

We have been raising the profile of the project and its aims at events, including talks to Parklands Residents Association AGM and VIP Group.

As always, there is so much to learn, understand and complete. Without volunteers we wouldn't be able to do the work we do and make a difference. Special thanks go to all the teams, groups and individuals that we work with.

*Sarah Hughes*

# Flood Relief Work on the Manhood

Since its creation two years ago the Flood Prevention Group (FPG) has worked closely with the Environment Agency (EA) and the Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group. We have always believed that flood relief projects are an opportunity to improve the beautiful area we live in for the benefit of all, human residents and wildlife.

A major success, in collaboration with the EA and the County Council, was the construction of the Bookers Lane Flood Alleviation Channel; a 400-metre long new waterway which meanders from Bookers Lane to the north to join the Medmerry channel along Earnley Manor Close. This waterway, along with its island and small wetland area, is already attracting birds and mammals. The project, with its two road culverts, took two years to complete at a cost of over £500,000.



*Photo © 2015 Julia Bowering*

*Bookers Lane Island*



*Photo © 2015 Julia Bowering*

*New culvert in Almodington*

We have also recently been busy working with the EA on major works to improve the Grange Rife in Almodington. Here we have managed to remove over 40 metres of restrictive culverts and replace them with open channels. Besides the benefits in terms of water flow, this work has resulted in an improved nature corridor for wildlife. With over £50,000 of County Council Operation Watershed grant, we are now working with the EA on Phase 2 of the Almodington project, which will improve water flow and habitat to the east of Batchmere Road.

Working with the Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group and the County Council, we have also made lots of improvements in Birdham and, in particular, we are in the early stages of a large project which will again replace over 150 metres of culverts with open channels.

*Robert Carey  
Chairman, Birdham & Earnley  
Flood Prevention Group*



*Photo © 2015 Julia Bowering*

## PLANTS AND POISONOUS SAP

Although we don't appear to have many poisonous plants in Britain that are dangerous to humans, we do have a few with poisonous sap, which can cause mild or severe irritation to skin and eyes. One example is giant hogweed. This plant contains photo-sensitising compounds, which inhibit the skin's ability to protect against sunlight. The effects of this can be serious, leading to severe burns on the skin.

Ragwort is regarded as an injurious weed under the provisions of the Weed Act 1959. This is largely because of its danger to horses, in particular if it is ingested. To humans it is said to cause an itchy rash which may last a few days.

I try to avoid touching the garden plant euphorbia. This plant has a milky white sap which is poisonous. The side-effects of coming in contact with this plant are caused by certain chemical components found in latex. This plant is abundant in our garden and my husband has come in contact with its sap and experienced extreme irritation, especially to the eyes. Washing his hands after coming in contact with the plant doesn't remove the danger as it appears to stay on the hands for some time. He found this out when inadvertently rubbing his eyes after hand washing.

Few people may be aware that some vegetables have sap that can also cause irritation and burns. Celery is one such plant. This plant has a sap that when absorbed by the skin in the presence of sunlight can lead to blisters and burns. I know this from personal experience having worked in horticulture, and had to warn people to keep covered when cutting the leaves off or be left with burns or unsightly marks which can last for weeks.

There may not be many plants significantly dangerous to humans. Nevertheless, keeping eyes and skin covered would seem to be a sensible precaution when working amongst plants, either in the garden or elsewhere.

*Val Gatehouse*

***Giant Hogweed***



*Photo © 2015 Val Gatehouse*

# THE EL NINO PHENOMENON – A CONCISE EXPLANATION.

‘Someone told me this is an ‘El Nino’ year’ said my friend, ‘but I have no idea what ‘El Nino’ is!’ Others might have the same dilemma as she, while some may have at best a sketchy idea of an event which though distant can affect us here in the UK.

This is indeed an El Nino year, as predicted by the United States National Ocean Service [www.oceanservice.noaa.gov](http://www.oceanservice.noaa.gov) with a 90%+ chance of its continuing throughout the northern hemisphere autumn and 85% of its lasting through 2015/16 winter. So, with apologies to the well-informed, here is a concise description of what goes on. Towards the end of the calendar year a natural phenomenon occurs in the eastern Pacific whereby cool, nutrient-rich water welling up from the depths is replaced by warmer water, signalling the end of the season for the fishermen of Ecuador and north Peru. They traditionally named this event ‘El Nino’ (the Boy Child, in Spanish interpreted as ‘The Christ Child’) since it coincides with Christmastime. However, every 2-7 years a much stronger warming event occurs, lasting several months and affecting the path of the high-altitude jet stream and the route of the ‘trade winds’, and it is to this phenomenon that the term ‘El Nino’ is now applied.

During ‘normal’ years trade winds blow westwards across the Pacific, pushing warm surface water towards Indonesia and allowing cooler, eco-system-supporting water to surface along the east Pacific coast. This relatively cool water extends along the equator from South America to the central ocean, resulting in high rainfall to the warmer west, and relatively dry conditions to the east. In an ‘El Nino’ year the prevailing trade winds weaken, causing an abnormal rise in sea-surface temperature on the eastern Pacific coast, thereby suppressing the cooler current. The impact of this is felt most acutely in countries bordering the Pacific Ocean, shifting tropical rainfall distribution from the east Indian Ocean to the tropical Atlantic, affecting sea-level pressure throughout the global tropics and altering atmospheric circulation both in the tropics and beyond.

Some of the global effects attributed to ‘El Nino’ follow:

- The occurrence of cyclones in the tropical south Pacific shifts to the east.
- East Africa, normally the drier region, experiences wetter than normal weather during the long rains (March to May) while south central Africa, normally humid, is drier than normal.
- Drier than normal conditions in south east Asia and north Australia can lead to an increase in bush fires and poor air quality.
- High-pressure anomalies lead to a reduction in the formation of sea ice in some parts of Antarctica, whilst other parts become colder, with the opposite effect.
- In Europe, the effects appear to be more pronounced in winter, with the north experiencing colder, drier conditions and the south having milder, wetter weather, although this effect can be tempered by other meteorological factors.
- In the Pacific, as warm water spreads from west to east it takes the rain with it, so the western Pacific countries experience drought conditions and the normally dry eastern coast of the Americas experiences uncharacteristically wet weather

During the last several decades an increase in El Nino events is thought to be linked to global warming. Observations over a longer period are required to confirm this theory.

El Nino is the ‘warm phase’ of the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO), describing the fluctuations between the temperatures of ocean and atmosphere in the east/central equatorial Pacific Ocean. Then there is the ‘cold phase’ – La Nina – but that is another story!

Gina Scott

To find out more visit [www.elnino.noaa.gov/lanina\\_new\\_faq.html](http://www.elnino.noaa.gov/lanina_new_faq.html) or google el Nino and la Nina. There is a wealth of information out there.

## A GOOD LAWYER FOR THE EARTH

Ten years ago an up-and-coming young barrister was waiting on the top floor of the Old Bailey for the judges’ final verdict in a difficult and hard-fought case of corporate negligence. Her client had been severely injured and the case had wound on for three years. She knew that if she won this final appeal her career would be made; the world would be her oyster!



She found herself looking out of the window over the roofs, chimneys and green spaces of London. In her mind’s eye she travelled further across the globe, and into her head came a thought – ‘the Earth is in need of a good lawyer’. The judges found in her favour, and a lucrative career opened up before her. But that thought just would not go away. So, career abandoned, today Polly Higgins is ‘a Voice for the Earth’, a renowned Earth Lawyer, prize-winning author and inspirational speaker on the international stage. Her aim is to bring in a Law of Ecocide, making damage to the environment and the world’s ecosystems an international crime, equal to war crimes and genocide. At first hers was a lone voice in the international wilderness, but she is gathering together a team of like-

minded lawyers from across the globe to join in her fight. Polly reckons there will be a Law of Ecocide by 2020.

If you would like to find out more about this remarkable woman and her campaign to hold to account individual offenders as well as corporations visit [www.eradicatingecocide](http://www.eradicatingecocide) or [www.transitionchichester.org](http://www.transitionchichester.org) who recently arranged a day of events involving Polly in Chichester.

Gina Scott



## BAT WALK AT EAST BEACH POND

When spring awakens the Manhood Peninsula, it marks the beginning of the bat-walking season for the MWHG. Bats will begin hunting and creating maternity colonies immediately after hibernation, so there is always a wave of activity to see in May.

Previously restored to a biodiverse habitat by the MWHG, the East Beach Pond in Selsey was an ideal place to witness bats feeding. Sarah Hughes led the walkers, bat detectors in hand, for a preliminary turn around the pond to talk about the issues bats face and quiz the group on some bat facts. The area is fortunate enough to be home to all 18 species found in the UK, so it is important to create hedgerows and fresh water habitats on the peninsula, to safeguard their food sources. It's encouraging to see the pond thrive, however action is needed in urban areas to conserve this vulnerable order of mammals. The displacement of bat roosts is a major threat to populations and with some species able to squeeze into a gap the width of your thumb, it's hard to know if a roost could exist, and be disturbed, in your own home. Education on the habits and needs of bats will go a long way to protect natural habitats and provide more bat bricks and boxes.

A heron and nesting mute swans, with eight cygnets in tail, charmed the group while we waited for the firsts bats to emerge. Just before the sun had fully set, our youngest walkers heard the chirps of a common pipistrelle through their bat detector. Echolocation calls from nearby bats are converted through detectors for human ears to hear, helping us to differentiate between species. We had great views of their flight patterns, as they caught insects on the wing, which also helped us to identify them. The walkers used their new bat-detecting skills and discovered a small group of pipistrelles in the adjacent car park. Protected from the wind and cold, the bats took advantage of the insect hot spot, showing a spectacular display of hunting over our heads. The evening ended for the walkers, but it was just the beginning for the bats - some can eat up to 3000 insects over the course of a night!

Our sightings are recorded and shared with the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre to help monitor and conserve the local populations of bats. We take walks regularly throughout the bat season, from May to October. If you would like to join us on a bat walk, see our diary of events to book a place. <http://mwhg.org.uk/diary-of-events/>

*Nicola Timney*

## THE LAUNCH OF THE SIDLESHAM HERITAGE TRAIL – A PERFECT DAY

The Launch of the Sidlesham Heritage Trail, which had been previewed on BBC South Today and BBC Radio Sussex, took place at Keynor (Farm) House by kind permission of Sara and Grant Kelly on Saturday 27 June. It was a memorable event thoroughly enjoyed by the 240 folk who came along. The sun shone all day on the attractive setting. Bill's family turned out in force to help, led by his stalwart right-hand lady, Sue, who was in charge of the amazing cream teas. With a team of helpers they kept going a flow of delicious home-made scones and jam, thick cream, local strawberries and cuppas, surpassing the numbers expected (and overcoming the recalcitrant tea urn by ferrying kettles from the house). The Big Pyramid Band entertained with lively swing music and if Her Majesty had suddenly appeared she would have felt quite at home, as everyone had dressed for the occasion and looked magnificent.

Toddlers in their best clothes played on the grass; octogenarians, sometimes with regional accents still discernible, greeted each other enthusiastically – 'Plot 50 was it..?' - and the name always followed later. Generations between mingled, reminisced, made acquaintances and watched the running SLA slide show in 'The Hut'. Long-term Sidlesham resident Val Gatehouse, who assisted Bill with his research, recalled dances and social events taking place there. Earlier, the first participants in the scheme had been billeted there while they were trained in this completely new way of life, to be joined later by their families and moved into their standard SLA house, easily recognisable today.

The gardens of Keynor House were open for guests to explore and a 'taster' walk along part of the Trail took place, with the complete Walk the following day.

The day culminated with the recreation of the original settlers' photograph, taken outside The Hut. Both photographs will be posted on a website which has been designed. An LSA film is also planned in conjunction with the Novium museum in Chichester.

There was a long list of 'thank-yous' which Bill likened to an Oscar speech, saying he would try not to cry – and finally a big round of applause and a rousing cheer for The Man himself. Well deserved – for this is an important contribution to the heritage of our Village, and a day to remember – a great pity if you missed it!

More information can be found on the website ([www.sidleshamheritage-trail.co.uk](http://www.sidleshamheritage-trail.co.uk)) including a copy of the trail leaflet which can be downloaded.

Alternatively, hard copies are available direct from Bill for a minimum donation of £1.00 to the Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group (Tel: 641154 or [billm89@hotmail.com](mailto:billm89@hotmail.com)).

*Gina Scott*



# DONNINGTON

Photo © 2015 Felicity McStea

I am now into my fifth year of monitoring the native hedgerow that we planted at Mile Pond Farm, behind the Apuldram Centre. At each visit I make a note of the flora and fauna encountered on site. Back in August 2012 I heard high-pitched squeaks coming from under an area of long, flattened grass; perhaps indicative of shrews.

During subsequent work parties we have come across runs and latrines of the short-tailed field vole *Microtis agrestis*, but nothing to suggest the presence of other small mammals. However, the physical evidence finally presented itself this April when I found a dead common shrew *Sorex araneus* on the cycle path that runs alongside the hedgerow.

Apart from this sad find, it was a glorious spring day. Bird song filled the air, with skylark and chiffchaff included in the mix. The blackthorn was in blossom and peacock butterflies were on the wing.

Felicity McStea



Photo © 2015 Felicity McStea



## WALKS LEAFLETS OUTLETS

Our walks leaflets can be purchased from the following places:-

Chichester District Council, Selsey Office  
Hunston Post Office (Tramway Walks only)  
Raycraft, High Street, Selsey  
RSPB Pagham Harbour Local Nature Reserve  
Selsey Printing and Publishing  
Selsey Town Council Office

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### MWHG Website

[www.mwhg.org.uk](http://www.mwhg.org.uk)

At the moment, the only section which is regularly being updated is the "Current Programmes" page. New content and updates are regularly required for example on wildlife, heritage, etc.

All contributions welcome.

email: [website@mwhg.org](mailto:website@mwhg.org)

## USEFUL WEBSITES

Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group - <http://www.mwhg.org.uk>  
Recording the changing seasons - <http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/>  
Local wood recycling - [http://www.aldingbournetrust.co.uk/services\\_recycling.htm](http://www.aldingbournetrust.co.uk/services_recycling.htm)  
Local - Bags made from 100% recycled clothing - <http://www.thegreendoor.co.uk/>  
Sussex Bat Group - <http://www.sussexbatgroup.org.uk/>  
UK moths - <http://ukmoths.org.uk/>  
Bug life - <http://www.buglife.org.uk/>  
Mammal Society - <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mammal/>  
Green shop - <http://www.greenshop.co.uk/>  
Environmental calendar - [www.countmeincalendar.info](http://www.countmeincalendar.info)  
Swift Conservation - <http://www.swift-conservation.org/>  
Wildcare Shop for products relating to ecology, Park management or conservation. - <http://www.wildcareshop.com>

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### NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

10 August 2015 (Autumn)  
10 November (Winter)  
10 February 2016 (Spring)  
10 May 2016(Summer)

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### EDITORIAL CONTACT DETAILS:

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**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**



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