

# Downlands Trust Newsletter

AUTUMN 2021

## From the Chairman

Peter Wakeham

Whilst Covid-19 is still very much with us, there are now many positive signs that nationally, locally and for the Trust itself, normal activities are returning. We were delighted to be able to take a stall jointly with the Downlands Partnership at the Banstead Village Fair in August and, whilst we have continued to give Zoom talks on the work of the Trust, we are now receiving our first bookings for indoor presentations. We are also looking forward to once again holding our AGM at the Banstead Community Centre on 19th October and we hope that many of our members will be able to join us. It is also pleasing that the Downlands Partnership has been able to recommence their programme of work parties and that staff from Fidelity International have again enjoyed participating in a range of conservation activities on some of the splendid sites managed by the Partnership.

We reported in the last newsletter that, together with the Downlands Partnership, we had embarked upon a fundraising campaign to facilitate the purchase of a new off-road vehicle for their Countryside Team. More information on the outcome of the campaign is provided below, but suffice it to say that the vehicle has now been ordered!

Many of us will have spent time this summer enjoying the local countryside and so will be aware of the impact that this year's weather has had on our flora and fauna. Bluebells flowered two to three weeks later than usual but nonetheless put on a memorable show and Butterfly Conservation has reported that butterfly numbers were significantly lower than normal following the unseasonably cold, wet spring. On a more positive note, abundant rainfall has meant that the countryside has been exceptionally green this summer and our Downland plants have flourished, with numbers of Bee Orchids and Pyramidal Orchids being particularly noteworthy.

## Walks, talks and events

Noreen Siba

- **Autumn Fungus Foray** led by Jane McLauchlin. Sunday 10 October. Meet at 10am at Holly Lane car park, Banstead. 10 people maximum. For a place, contact Noreen Siba - [Noreen@nsiba.co.uk](mailto:Noreen@nsiba.co.uk) on 07770 417 796
- **Downlands Trust AGM** Tuesday 19 October at the Lambert Room, Banstead Centre, The Horseshoe, Banstead SM7 2BQ. 7.30pm for a prompt 7.45pm start. We would love to see you there. There will be a short talk afterwards on the subject of Old Lodge Farm by Sean Grufferty of the Partnership Grazing Team.

## Calling all Members and Volunteers

We already have the dates below in 2022 when we want to advertise the work of the Downlands Trust and Partnership. However, we cannot manage to man a stall all day as well as setting up and dismantling the stand. We need a rota of helpers on these dates who assist for a couple of hours. If you know of anyone willing to help, please contact **Noreen on 07770 417 796**

- Saturday 2 July                      Old Coulsdon Village Fair
- Saturday 16 July                    Chipstead Village Flower Show and Fair
- Monday 29 August                  Carshalton Environmental Fair

**If you are reading this newsletter and you are not a member, please do consider joining us. Our membership form is on the back page.**

## Grants made to organisations

Pam Mascall

Since our last newsletter in Spring, grants approved have included:

- Replacement items for electric fencing used by the grazing team - £864
- Construction of a new fence line at Tithepit Shaw Lane (in conjunction with Tandridge District Council) - £1,416
- Purchase of a brushcutter for use by the grazing team to clear paddocks - £516
- PPE equipment for the Downlands Partnership - £196
- Repairs to the post and rail fence in Happy Valley car park - £659
- Construction of 4 new bye-law noticeboards at Happy Valley - £200
- Repairs to the steps and installation of a new information notice board at Addington Hills - £860
- Purchase of three Sussex bullocks by the grazing team to replace older bullocks - £2,700
- Purchase of a young Beulah ram as a sire for the Beulah conservation grazing ewes - £500

In addition, the grazing team has requested funds of £960 to trial electric collars for their goats. Sean writes:

The collars are absolutely amazing - we can see where the goats are at all times and only a few have even been shocked as the tone seems to be enough. We are so grateful to the Trust as the collars will transform our ability to graze certain areas and will take a huge amount of pressure off us by eliminating the need to jump proof every part of a site and the stress of dealing with escapes.

Another amazing thing is that we can print posters with a QR code which our stock checkers can scan and it gives a live location link! Again how brilliant and it is a way of saving the checkers' time and worry if they can't find them - especially at places such as Park Ham!



Photo: Sean Grufferty

## Ladybird survey update - Banstead Woods & Chipstead Downs LNR

Andy Keay

In view of the almost non-existent summer weather in 2021, it is time to update interested persons as to the progress of the Ladybird survey commenced in October 2020. Although significant progress was made between October 2020 and April 2021, the unusual weather pattern we have suffered throughout 2021 has impacted on the survey methodology with the recorders unable, at times, to conduct any form of specialised survey work - mostly due to the wet conditions. It has proven virtually impossible to conduct detailed survey work on the grasslands using either sweep nets or vacuum sampling and so the records from the grasslands are severely lacking. However, we have found 33 species of Ladybird from the site and will now continue the survey into 2022 to enable sampling coverage of all habitats present.

There are certainly fewer Ladybirds to be found this current year, probably due to the inclement weather, particularly the cold period during the early spring that may have adversely affected particularly the predatory species that were emerging from their winter dormancy only to find there was little or no prey available.

Fourteen of the species discovered at the site are 'inconspicuous' - i.e. they are small and often cryptically coloured which may partially explain why they are less well represented in the national record database. Examples of 'inconspicuous' Ladybirds are shown below followed by a table of all species present at the site and their conservation and distribution status.



*Rhyzobius chrysomeloides* (left) - the Round-keeled Rhizobius, is an 'inconspicuous' species at about 3 mm length and found mostly on Ivy.

*Scymnus auratus* (right) - the Oak Scymnus, at about 2 mm length, is found in woodland and shows a preference for oak trees.



*Nephus quadrimaculatus* (left) - the Four-spotted Nephus, at 1.6 mm length is another species found on ivy (on trees or walls) where it predaes scale insects.



Common name	Scientific name	UK Conservation Status	Distribution trend
2-spot Ladybird	<i>Adalia bipunctata</i>		Decreasing
10-spot Ladybird	<i>Adalia decempunctata</i>		Stable
Eyed Ladybird	<i>Anatis ocellata</i>		Decreasing
Larch Ladybird	<i>Aphidecta oblitterata</i>		Decreasing
Cream-spot Ladybird	<i>Calvia quattuordecimguttata</i>		Stable
Heather Ladybird	<i>Chilocorus bipustulatus</i>	Local	Stable
Kidney-spot Ladybird	<i>Chilocorus renipustulatus</i>		Stable
Horseshoe Ladybird	<i>Clitostethus arcuatus</i>	Endangered	?
7-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>		Decreasing
Pine Ladybird	<i>Exochomus quadripustulatus</i>		Stable
Orange Ladybird	<i>Halyzia sedecimguttata</i>		Increasing
Harlequin Ladybird	<i>Harmonia axyridis</i>		Increasing
Cream-streaked Ladybird	<i>Harmonia quadripunctata</i>	Local	Stable
Bryony Ladybird	<i>Henosepilachna argus</i>	Very Local	Stable
Adonis' Ladybird	<i>Hippodamia variegata</i>	Nationally Scarce / Nb	Stable
18-spot Ladybird	<i>Myrrha octodecimguttata</i>	Local	Stable
Four-spotted Nephus	<i>Nephus quadrimaculatus</i>	Vulnerable	Stable
Red-patched Nephus	<i>Nephus redtenbacheri</i>	Very Local	Decreasing
14-spot Ladybird	<i>Propylea quattuordecimpunctata</i>		Stable
22-spot Ladybird	<i>Psyllobora vigintiduopunctata</i>		Decreasing
Round-keeled Rhyzobius	<i>Rhyzobius chrysomeloides</i>	Very Local	Increasing
Forestier's Rhyzobius	<i>Rhyzobius forestieri</i>	Newly established in UK	?
Pointed-keeled Rhyzobius	<i>Rhyzobius litura</i>		Stable
Oak Scymnus	<i>Scymnus auritus</i>	Very Local	Decreasing
Angle-spotted Scymnus	<i>Scymnus frontalis</i>	Very Local	Stable
Red-rumped Scymnus	<i>Scymnus haemorrhoidalis</i>	Very Local	Decreasing
Red-flanked Scymnus	<i>Scymnus interruptus</i>	Very Local	Stable
Bordered Scymnus	<i>Scymnus limbatus</i>	Nationally Scarce / Nb	Stable
Schmidt's Scymnus	<i>Scymnus schmidtii</i>	Nationally Scarce / Nb	?
Pine Scymnus	<i>Scymnus suturalis</i>	Very Local	Stable
Dot Ladybird	<i>Stethorus pusillus</i>	Very Local	Decreasing
24-spot Ladybird	<i>Subcoccinella vigintiquatuor-punctata</i>		Stable
16-spot Ladybird	<i>Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata</i>		Stable

The information relating to the UK Conservation Status and Distribution trend is derived from data held by the National Ladybird Survey at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

Every Ladybird found at the Reserve has been catalogued and the resultant listing helps give an indication of the Ladybird population structure, albeit by not a particularly scientific method. The commonest species (by numbers recorded) are:- 7-spot [27%], Rhyzobius chrysomeloides [21%], Harlequin [16%], Pine [7%], 22-spot [6%], Orange [5%], with the remaining species accounting for the remaining 18%. This very basic analysis of the population may well change over the remaining period of the survey.

## Banstead Village Fair 7 August

Noreen Siba

The Trust had a stand at the fair which was a successful day despite very heavy downpours and thunder! Quite a lot of people asked about the Downlands Trust and took our leaflets and newsletters, and the "Visit the Chalk" booklet. A few people took the Downlands Partnership work schedule which Connor from the Partnership supplied.



Sean and Jamie

I would like to thank Connor for lending us the Partnership's gazebo which is so good, and for all his and Downlands Trust member Emma's help in collecting and returning all the equipment, banners and information materials.

Sean from the Downlands Partnership and his friend Jamie brought along lots of chalk downland plants that they had grown to sell. They stayed all day and were able to raise £113 which they donated to the Trust.



Councillor Jill Bray, Mayor of Reigate and Banstead, visits the Downlands Trust stand

## Ragwort pulling in Nork Park

Fidelity International

Fidelity International, Kingswood Office, organised a volunteer week for their staff in July to work alongside the Downlands Partnership. This article was written by one of their volunteers.

When the email came round about a Volunteer Day on the North Downs I was quick to apply for a day out of the flat and away from the computer. Team B were on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> at around 10am - 3pm and we were under strict instructions that there could be no mixing, so I was super happy when my Team Lead, Senior Management and PT all approved a day off the phones for me to help volunteer with the Downlands Partnership. The last time I did anything like this was 15 years ago back at Uni where I volunteered for Moor Trees Conservation group, which was pretty arduous at times up on Dartmoor, and shrub clearing in Wembury, so I was a little nervous about the day. With the weather becoming more unpredictable in the lead-up and my car refusing



to start, I couldn't be more grateful to Darren in the group for a lift to Nork Park car park on The Drive (in Banstead) - it's a residential side road off the A217 just a little bit further up from the turn off for Asda. We found a group assembled in Toyota jackets joining us for the day and after quick intros, the folks from the Downlands Partnership came to meet us and guide us to Nork Park. All of us were surprised having never known this area of countryside existed here and yet it's a regular spot for dogwalkers.

we were given a quick demonstration of how to pull the Ragwort (poisonous to horses) from the roots and shown the technique for using a Ragwort removal tool for some of the more resistant weeds. After passing the ragwort around and familiarising ourselves with it, we headed to the vehicles to leave our belongings whilst grabbing bin bags each. Scouring the field after a group had been here the previous day, Ragwort seemed few and far between until suddenly it was everywhere. In fact I'm still seeing it in my sleep! It was easy enough to pull and I didn't need the second set of leather gloves on top of my thin bamboo gloves in the end, but thick socks, long trousers and waterproof shoes kept me protected from stinging nettles.

I really enjoyed being outdoors and meeting new people, having only started at Fidelity in March 2021 and working from home. Not only was it educational as Rachel also showed us rare Pyramidal Orchids so we could all be careful not to step on them, but it was also nice knowing you were doing something good, whilst getting the added benefit of a day out of the office! It's an idea to bring a hot flask of tea/coffee if you're like me and get headaches from caffeine withdrawal (or if you're well prepared like Dave from the post room - bringing a hot flask of soup too) and keep your bottle of water with you by your side rather than leaving it in the vehicle for those of us who drink like fish! Some of the regulars even had camping chairs stored in the vehicle to make lunch just that little bit more comfortable. I can't recommend this enough to anyone else out there considering it and I honestly can't wait for the next one.





## Taking advantage of others - plants without chlorophyll

Peter Wakeham

Almost all plants contain chlorophyll, the pigment in leaves and stems that we see as green because it absorbs the blue and red wavelengths of light. Chlorophyll enables plants to produce food in the form of glucose through the process of photosynthesis but a very small number of species do not possess chlorophyll and rather than producing their own food they are able to parasitise other plants or fungi for this purpose. There are several such achlorophyllous species to be found locally in grasslands and woodlands on the chalk.

Common Broomrape (*Orobanche minor*) occurs fairly frequently in grassland and disturbed places in this area. It is mainly an annual and upon germination the root attaches to and penetrates the root of the host plant, usually a member of the Pea (*Fabaceae*) or Daisy (*Asteraceae*) family. Plants such as Clover and Bird's-foot Trefoil are particularly favoured as well as other legumes, disrupting nutrients and water transport in the host root system. Common Broomrape has the ability to produce up to 500,000 seeds per plant and these are dispersed mainly by the wind and animals.



Common Broomrape

Two other species of broomrape are also found locally, Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*) which is parasitic on ivy that is growing on the ground and Knapweed Broomrape (*Orobanche elatior*) that is restricted to Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), a plant of chalk grassland. Both of these species may be annual or perennial.

One of the earlier plants to flower in spring is Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*), a perennial that is parasitic mainly on the roots of Hazel although it is sometimes found on other woody plants such as Alder or Beech. The clustered flowers resemble an orchid, but it is named Toothwort because of its similarity to a stack of teeth. Its scientific name, *Lathraea*, is derived from the Greek word for clandestine and secret, this is because it spends most of the year under the ground. When it is ready to flower, it emerges above the soil from underground rhizomes much like a mushroom.



Toothwort

Toothwort is nowhere very common and is typically found in areas of coppiced Hazel, a notable site being the Woodland Trust's estate at Langley Vale, Epsom. It is long established in the places where it occurs but is seemingly reluctant to expand its range to otherwise apparently suitable sites.

Yellow Bird's-nest (*Hypopitys monotropa*) also has no chlorophyll and was until recently thought to be saprophytic, that is deriving nutrients from decaying leaf litter. However, recent research has shown it to be epiparasitic, using *Tricholoma* fungi to extract nutrients from the roots of living trees in the vicinity. Thus it is feeding from a host tree but doing so through an intermediary.

The flowers are pollinated by insects and the seeds are dust-like and once ripened and released they are dispersed by the wind and may travel a considerable distance.

This perennial species is typically found growing among the leaf litter of Beech woodlands on chalk and limestone soils. It is scarce in this area but small populations are to be found at Caterham Viewpoint, Chipstead Downs and Shabden Park Farm, Chipstead.



Yellow Bird's-nest

There are just two British achlorophyllous orchids. One is the Ghost Orchid (*Epipogium aphyllum*) which was declared extinct in 2005 but was refound in 2009 and the other is the Bird's Nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*). The name refers to the plant's tangled root system which is said to resemble a badly-made bird's nest.

As with Yellow Bird's-nest, it is completely dependent upon a host fungus in the soil for nutrients to germinate and grow. This fungus is, in turn, dependent upon attachments to the trees in the woodland.

The Bird's-nest Orchid is also found growing in the leaf litter of Beech woodlands on calcareous soils. Whilst it has been recorded previously in this area, the nearest sites are now on Mickleham Downs and Denbies Hillside.



Bird's-nest Orchid



Dodder (*Cuscuta epithymum*) appears little more than a tangled mass of slender, reddish-coloured threads and is to be found draped over a variety of plants. It would be easily overlooked if not for its tiny, pale-pink, densely clustered bell-shaped flowers.

This species has no roots of its own but draws nutrient directly from its host plants through suckers that penetrate their stems. Because it depends upon low-growing vascular plants with chlorophyll, Dodder is found in well lit open situations, whereas the previously described species are able to thrive in fairly heavy shade. The photograph (right) was taken at Farnes Rough, Chipstead, but Dodder is by no means confined to the chalk.

The above plants are all wholly dependent upon their hosts for survival. However, there are a number of other species that have leaves containing chlorophyll but which nonetheless parasitise other plants in order to obtain some of their nutrients. These are referred to as hemi-parasites of which Yellow Rattle is one, more about which in the next issue of the newsletter.



Dodder

## Improved access to Croydon's open spaces

Meike Weiser

Thanks to the generous grants from the Downlands Trust, visitors to Addington Hills can now safely traverse the steep slopes on site as the Downlands Partnership repaired and replaced a number of steps. Steps either side of the popular viewpoint have been improved which will help manage the stream of visitors who have discovered the site since the lockdowns last year.

Addington Hills is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation and one of the last few remaining areas of lowland heath in Greater London. The acid pebble soils favour Ling and Bell Heather, and are home to both Slow Worms and Common Lizards. The grant received will also fund the replacement of one of the site information boards which succumbed to natural decay.

Hawkhurst Wood in Kenley also benefited from a grant from the Trust. As the site is part of the new South London Downs National Nature Reserve it was in need of a proper name board that indicated its importance as a gateway site into the reserve. Kenley Station is roughly 1 mile away from the woodland entrance which opens access to the wider 417 hectares of the national nature reserve. A new bench invites visitors for a rest to enjoy the view after they have hiked up the long slope of Hawkhurst Road.



Hawkhurst Wood is a wood of two halves, the top contains an area of old hornbeam coppice whereas the bottom slopes are covered in secondary ash woodland. Ash dieback is affecting the site greatly and it might revert back to open chalk grassland and a few trees.

The Downlands Partnership produced and installed an entrance sign post and finger post, funded by the Downlands Trust, and also installed a series of steps to ease the climb from New Barn Lane and created a circular path to open access to a small chalk meadow.



A belated thanks to the Trust for funding a new brush cutter for the Friends of South Norwood Country Park at the end of last year. With all the challenges and changes it has not yet come into full use but a new volunteer has now been identified who will be trained so that it can be put to good use at this urban nature reserve.

Meike is Community Conservation Partnership Officer with the London Borough of Croydon

## Long Hill

Pam Mascall

Long Hill, a thin strip of open grassland in Woldingham, is known for its magnificent chalk flora and wonderful views over the Surrey Hills.



Common Sanfoin

The area has been kept open over many years through Downlands Partnership work days and grazing by the Partnership sheep. These have been funded over the last couple of years with the aid of a grant from the Downlands Trust. Among the plants that grow here is Sainfoin. This is both attractive to look at and an excellent source of pollen for many types of bee.

A new bench has recently been built and installed by Tom and the Partnership volunteers. The bench, which has also been funded by the Downlands Trust, provides a welcome resting spot to enjoy the view.



View over the magnificent Surrey Hills

## Driving Downlands Ahead - fundraising target has been reached!

Debbie Hescott

Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has kindly supported our fundraising campaign, which has been running over the last five months, to raise the balance of £5,000 towards the cost of a new Toyota Hilux off-road pick up for our Downlands Partnership task team.

The fundraising campaign has now ended and we have reached the goalpost in time, successfully raising all the necessary funds to make the purchase (£20,000 net total was required).

We received a fantastic 46 online donations to the dedicated Downlands Trust Virgin Money Giving fundraising page, including various significant, generous donations from Downlands volunteers, local supporters and friends, plus some donations given offline including Banstead Rotary. These donations of all levels have made a real difference and everyone in the Downlands team is very grateful for all the support we have received.

We (in partnership with Downlands Trust) also gained funding from three successful small grant applications made to Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, Chaldon Village Council and Caterham-on-the-Hill Parish Council. In addition, we received a contribution from our host authority Surrey County Council to ensure we reached the target in time. Once we have taken delivery of the new vehicle, we will share with you an update and photos.

Our special thanks to the trustees of the Downlands Trust, our charity partner, for their support in running this campaign and for their generous key contribution of £10,000. Thanks, too, to fantastic corporate partner Fidelity International, Kingswood office, for their significant contribution of £5,000.

This has been an excellent partnership and community involvement campaign, which has been a great success for all involved and we look forward to having our new Hilux out on the road on task very soon!

Debbie Hescott is Partnership Development Officer of Surrey Countryside Partnerships (Downlands, Lower Mole & Surrey Heathland)

## Banstead Wildlife Field

David Gradidge

This small two acre site, an area known as Lower Bolters Field in Victorian times, was opened to the public on 18 September 1997. The photo shows local school children attending the ceremony.



Volunteers from the Prince's Trust built the sensory garden in 1996 and later that year the Downlands Country Management Project helped with creating paths, digging out the pond and planting 800 trees. Local children helped with the planting.

A management plan was written in September 1998 stating that contractors would mow the long grass three times a year. I became involved in 2001 following an incident where the contractors scalped the grass and left the area in a mess. It was then decided that the grass would be cut once a year on a rotational basis using a power scythe. I ran this operation for many years. The only problem was raking up the cuttings left in neat lines by the mower. These were removed from the site by the council.



Most of the trees took and have had to be thinned. The pond has been relined and the sensory garden replanted.

Look out for Cowslips and at the right time Pyramidal Orchids. Marbled White butterflies can be seen from late June and two years ago, I was lucky enough to see a Brown Hairstreak.

They must have used excellent timber some 25 years ago, for the fencing on the road is still good and so is the palisade for the garden. More worrying is the state of the paths and the weed in the pond.

## Projects

Pam Mascall

The Trustees spend considerable time talking to and visiting local conservation groups in order to identify and discuss projects where financial support from the Downlands Trust may make all the difference between the project going ahead or not. The area covered by the Trust is wide and the Trustees do not always have the time to visit every site.

If members or readers know of projects which would:

- promote for the benefit of the public the conservation of the physical and natural environment through the management of the countryside and/or
- advance the education of the public in the conservation and management of the physical and natural environment

and which would benefit from Trust funding, we would be grateful to hear from you.

Please email details to the Trust at [grants@downlandstrust.org.uk](mailto:grants@downlandstrust.org.uk)

## Support us with membership, donation or a legacy

### DOWNLANDS TRUST MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

If you are not a member or if you know anyone who would like to support our valuable work in the countryside, we would be delighted to receive the following application form and subscription. Alternatively, you can join via our website

#### TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP (please tick)

- ☐ Individual (**£10**)  
☐ Senior /student /unwaged (**£5**) Please delete as applicable  
☐ Family (**£15**)  
☐ Group /company /school (**£15**) Please delete as applicable

Please note: Memberships are due for renewal annually on 1st January. However, any memberships taken out after 1st September in any year are covered for membership for the following calendar year.

#### PAYMENT OPTIONS (please tick as applicable)

- ☐ I enclose a cheque for £..... to cover the subscription. You may like to add an additional donation to aid our work.  
☐ I have made an online payment of £..... to your bank account, Downlands Trust 40-09-04 31439820. Please use your name as the reference so that we can connect the payment to your membership.

#### GIFT AID Please tick the box below if you are in a position to do so.

- ☐ I agree to the Downlands Trust claiming tax under the Gift Aid Scheme on all my donations and subscriptions until I advise otherwise. I confirm that I am paying an amount of UK Income and/or Capital Gains Tax that at least equals the amount that the charity will reclaim.

#### YOUR DETAILS

Title:	Full name:		
Address:			
	Postcode:		
Email:			
Telephone:			
Signature:	Date:		

Please return completed membership application to:  
**Membership Secretary, Downlands Trust, 71 Warren Road, Banstead, SM7 1LG**

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Use [AmazonSmile](#) when shopping and Amazon will donate to Downlands Trust, at no cost to you.

A similar arrangement exists with [easyfundraising](#)

#### Downlands Trust

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