

FREE bumper pull out Countryside Events Guide
Sign up for 'Wild about Gardens'
Kent goes Wild comes to Tunbridge Wells Countryside 2010 - how to get involved please take one!

Inside this issue:

A newsletter from the Kent High Weald Partnership Spring / Summer 2010



Weald Wise

Kent Goes Wild for Free!

The Garden of England is a beautiful place with huge varieties of wildlife and habitats for everyone to see and enjoy. Wildlife spotting is not only limited to specific designated sites; there are some great places to see all kinds of species, if you keep your eyes peeled. You can spot wildlife in your town centre, along the side of roads, in parks, woodlands, hedges, roadside verges, gardens or grasslands.

For the last four years Kent County Council has been involved in organising Kent Goes Wild, an event which encourages more people to become interested in wildlife recording and conservation. This year the event is being held at Dunorlan Park, Tunbridge Wells on the 25th and 26th September. This is the first time the event has been held in West Kent, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and KHWP have joined forces to promote the event and make it the biggest and best yet.

The county's wildlife recorders will be there to answer any questions you may have and there will be plenty of opportunities to get involved. Children can take part in junior recorders activities at the event and over the summer holidays. KHWP will be hosting a series of wildlife spotter, taster sessions all over Tunbridge Wells Borough (please see our events guide for more details) and some great prizes are up for grabs in the children's really wild art competition. Attending the event and all the build up wildlife sessions are completely free of charge.

Further information can be found at www.kent.gov.uk/kentgoeswild for info on local taster sessions and the really wild art competition visit www.khwp.org.uk



A Kent Goes Wild supporter

Surveytastic!

It is getting towards that time of year when wildlife is coming out of hibernation, plants and trees are beginning to bud and the KHWP is getting ready to survey! Knowing what plants and animals live on our nature reserves and green spaces is always extremely useful as it helps us determine the way we manage them. It also gives us a fascinating insight into the lives and patterns of our rarest creatures, giving us clues on how to protect them further. From sightings of reptiles to birds, all information is valuable.



photo: Lee Brady KRAG

A female adder

The Kent High Weald Partnership is teaming up with Kent Wildlife Trust and the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (KRAG) to create a joint survey across the neighbouring heathlands of Cinderhill Woods and Brenchley Wood. This should give us a valuable outlook on the way reptiles live and move on the heathland and just how important the heathland habitat is to maintain.

We are always on the look out for keen volunteers to help us with any of our survey work so if it's ranking reptiles, nosing at newts or ogling orchids please get in touch!

Gemma Grant
Partnership Officer (Assistant)



A traditional Kentish orchard

Orchards for Everyone

Traditional orchards in Kent have been gradually disappearing from our landscapes for years as farmers have to modernise to remain competitive against cheap imports, heavy cropping dwarf fruit varieties have replace the old inefficient orchards. It is thought that up to 60% of the UK's traditional orchards have been lost in the last 50 years!

The importance of remaining orchards has now been recognised, as they not only provide amazing habitat to hundreds of species of lichens, mosses, insects and birds but they can also provide fantastic educational and community involvement opportunities in local areas.

Countryside Management Partnerships across Kent have joined forces to hopefully begin a new project to protect, maintain and enhance existing traditional orchards. The 'Orchards for Everyone' project could see the creation and restoration of more community orchards, to use and learn from- giving us a glimpse of Kent's past traditions, conserving them and passing them on to future generations.

If you would like some 'incider' information or would like to take a bite out of the apple and get involved, or know of any traditional orchards in the area that you think would be suitable for the scheme, please get in touch with KHWP.

Gemma Grant
Partnership Officer (Assistant)

Culvert Conclusion

Strawberry Wood Culvert Restoration Project at Benenden has now been completed. Following the restoration of the stonework and installation of the flood defences last summer, a celebration day was held on August Bank Holiday. The warm and sunny weather was enjoyed by a good crowd, events such as archery, children's crafts, demonstrations in woodworking and charcoal making all helped to make the day really interactive and fun. Characters from the culverts past greeted visitors as they arrived, and a special camera revealed the internal structure of the culvert and a DVD showed the restoration process from start to finish. The event was also featured on Meridian News.

An interpretation panel incorporating a sound store has now been installed at the culvert. The sound store explains how the project developed and explores the local history of the area at the flick of a switch! A superb education pack has been created for teachers and Benenden Primary School have a welly walk that passes over the culvert.

To see the full array of materials and the story of the culvert's restoration visit our website www.khwp.org.uk The project was made possible by contributions from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Benenden Amenity and Countryside Society, Benenden Parish Council and Kent County Council.



Charcoal demo at the celebration day

Lottery Success!

The Food4Thought allotment project is now up and running! Having received Big Lottery Fund approval in November, this has been kindly match funded by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council via the healthy living agenda.

A new co-ordinator for Food4Thought, Amanda Sheer, has been appointed at the Pepenbury Trust, and we are now working flat out with our partners from Pepenbury, Oakley School, Sherwood Park Primary School and The Little Forest Children's Centre on the first phase, to turn the plans we have on paper into fantastic vegetable gardens for the new growing season ahead.

Events and work parties are planned throughout the spring and summer at all three sites, and KHWP staff and volunteers will join local community helpers and parents to install a range of local and sustainable building materials



(chestnut edging cut by our volunteers at Cinderhill and recycled boardwalk from the Crane Valley are some examples).

As well as creating the allotments, the project is looking for volunteers to help out longer term. Growing your own food has never been so popular, and waiting lists for an allotment in Tunbridge Wells can be long. If you are looking for a space to grow, an opportunity to learn more about vegetable growing, or even to share your knowledge, and take some fresh food home as a reward, contact Amanda at Pepenbury on 01892 822168.

Nick Robinson
Partnership Officer (Mid-week)



Pepenbury allotment starting to take shape

Back to the Future



Energy Monster

There have been times in the High Weald when energy demand was high and the only sources of energy available were renewable, for example the Romans used wood and water power to produce large amounts of iron. Woodlands were carefully managed through coppicing to ensure a sustainable source of timber. Could this life before electricity and fossil fuels provide answers for our energy needs today?

Primary schools in the High Weald have been learning how to be more sustainable. Advice and support provided by Kent County Council's energy team, Kent Eco-Schools officer and The Skinners' School, a Specialist Science School have helped primary schools realise the potential for renewable energy installations.

A workshop about renewable energy in the High Weald with accompanying resources was designed by the Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP) and High Weald AONB unit. This workshop will be made available to all High Weald Hero schools, who have made a pledge to care for their local environment. The workshop enables teachers to deliver a lesson about energy from a local perspective across all year groups.

An Energy Day at Bedgebury Pinetum has been planned for 6 Tunbridge Wells schools in March. Teachers from all HWH schools are invited to come along to see the activities which will include constructing and racing solar cars and generating electricity through pedal power. Visiting teachers will also receive a teachers resource pack to take away. Funding for this project has been made available from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and High Weald AONB 'Sustainability Development Fund'.

If you are interested in receiving any of the resources mentioned above or borrowing a renewable energy kit for your school please go to www.khwp.org.uk or call 01580 212972.

Karen Maier
Partnership Officer (Education)

Kent High Weald Partnership Team

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About Us

The Kent High Weald Partnership was started in 1991, as a partnership funded by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent County Council and Natural England. We are part of seven Kent Countryside Management Partnerships. We work with individuals, community groups, schools, youth groups, landowners, local businesses and Parish Councils.

Our aim is to 'link the local community and the countryside, by raising awareness and encouraging action'. You can contact us via e-mail at info@khwp.org.uk, telephone on 01580 212972, or by post at Kent High Weald Partnership, Conservation Centre, Bedgebury Pinetum, Bedgebury Road, Goudhurst, Kent TN17 2SJ. Further information can be found on our web site at www.khwp.org.uk.

Weald Wide Updates



Emma in action, eating!

Welcome Aboard

A warm welcome to Gemma Grant, who joined KHWP as Assistant Officer in November. Gemma previously worked at Capstone Farm Country Park in Medway. Gemma will be kept busy working with all the team on a variety of tasks and events.

Fancy a breath of fresh air?

Throughout South East England, organisers great and small are getting together to present COUNTRYSIDE 2010, a two-week Super Showcase of country-based activities and events that will get us all up, out and hooked. The fortnight runs from 29th May to 13th June. In the meantime, there's already plenty to do! Check out www.countryside2010.org.uk



A Treat for Toddlers

As part of the Weald Forest Ridge Scheme, KHWP will be engaging parents and toddlers in accessing the countryside. As well as working directly with nursery and pre-school groups to break down barriers we will be producing a child friendly walk booklet, highlighting easy access for all routes in beautiful Forest Ridge locations.



New parent and toddler project

Loads of FREE Green Events

KHWP events programme is bigger than ever, as well as being free to all, there is a huge selection of things for all ages to get involved in. So if you want to have a go at being Ray Mears, a stroke of the Tony Hart's or a flutter of the Bill Oddie's it's all in our events programme! Give us a call to book your favourite 01580 212972

Raindrops won't keep pouring on our heads!

A huge thank you to Deputy leader of KCC, Councillor Alex King who has kindly agreed to fund 2 new event marquees for the partnership. These will provide much needed all weather facilities for the many events and outdoor activities we run.



Follow Us!

It's official KHWP is on twitter follow our up to the second movements www.twitter/khwp

Jacob appearing on a small screen soon..

KHWP has completed the filming of the My High Weald, Woodland Chapter, with Jacob the coppice worker set in the 17th Century. He tells the story of his time as a woodland worker in the High Weald and reflects on changes in woodland management. Funding for this fantastic story came from the Strawberry Wood Culvert Restoration Project and can be found in the learning zone of the High Weald website www.highweald.org



Jacob the Coppicer



Bek and Rowen

A new High Weald Hero arrives...

Congratulations to our Education Officer Rebekah Bibby & husband Jon on the birth of their baby boy Rowan, we hope to see him out on a volunteer task day very soon!

Bloom is back in Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2010

www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk



Pleachers and Beetles

In spring of last year the Friends of Dunorlan Park, working with KHWP and Head Gardener Tony Ewins of English Landscapes, received a grant from the Kent Community Foundation's Grassroots Fund. The aim was to involve the local community in the wider appreciation of the Park's natural habitats and wildlife through a series of volunteer training events.

Reptile, amphibian and plant surveys, bat and moth events all took place during the summer. Practical training in habitat management took the form of three hedgelaying days during January 2010.

Left to its own devices a hedge will soon become a line of trees, hedgelaying is the traditional technique of reinvigorating a hedge, to create a well-managed hedgerow that is thick and bushy, an impenetrable barrier to sheep and cattle and a fantastic habitat for wildlife.

The first day saw Tony's Monday volunteers, led by our hedgelaying expert Jason Adams, start work on a 100 metre stretch of hedge. The first job was to clear out the dead wood, old stakes and unwanted growth. The hedge was cut back on either side, and then Jason demonstrated how to lay the pleachers (single stems of the hedge). After laying, hazel stakes were driven into the hedge (with a beetle, or rough wooden mallet), and hazel rods woven along the top to create a sturdy framework to support the laid hedge.

Hedgelaying is traditionally a solitary occupation, but the three days at Dunorlan saw nearly fifty people get involved in laying the hedge! The finished result is a testament to the commitment of both the Friends of Dunorlan Park and Tony Ewins' team to wildlife and the local community.

Nick Robinson
Partnership Officer (Mid-week)



Hedgelaying instruction in Dunorlan Park

Tremendous Success!

The Kent Free Tree Scheme has developed considerably over the past few years and 2009 became the first year that the scheme was offered across all districts and boroughs of Kent. This expansion means that the scheme is now the only one in the country to operate on such a scale. 40,000 trees were distributed to 1302 applicants. The scheme was linked to the BBC Tree O'clock campaign which aimed to plant 1 million trees across the UK in an hour.

The Kent Free Tree Scheme supported the campaign and asked everyone who applied to plant their trees on the 5th December as part of the record attempt. Tunbridge Wells Borough came top of the tree for the second year in a row for both number of applications and overall trees planted, with residents planting over 5,800 trees. Well done to everyone who took part, helping make the borough a greener place to live.

Work has begun on making the application process for the 2010 scheme primarily web based. This will make the process easier, both for those applying to the scheme and for the significant administration of applications. Keep an eye out in the summer for information on this year's scheme and how to apply. Whether you want to plant some trees in the garden, a new hedge or extend some woodland 25 free trees could make this possible.

Full details will appear on our website www.khwp.org.uk, and let's hope we can make this another record year!

Ian Johnstone
Partnership Officer (Countryside)



Young helper planting a hedge

Reserves Round-up

Although our staff and volunteers get involved in all sorts of activities and events, from education work in schools, to community led projects like the restoration of Strawberry Wood culvert, our core work and events programme focuses on our nature reserves. Here is a round-up of the past six months, and a glimpse of things to come in 2010:

Crane Valley LNR, Cranbrook

The wet meadow was cut and cleared in the autumn by contractors. This freed us up to dig two new wildlife scrapes, shallow ponds that will be used by ephemeral wildlife until the unique vegetation in the meadow re-colonizes them. In June we will be asking volunteers to help us with a survey to monitor how the ponds are getting on – all training provided on the day!

The project to replace the decaying wooden boardwalk with recycled plastic materials continues in 2010. We will also be constructing a memorial bench overlooking the fen meadow, from trees that were overhanging the entrance to the reserve.

Hilbert Woods LNR, Tunbridge Wells

The Grosvenor and Hilbert Recreation Grounds are home to Hilbert Woods LNR, which includes two areas of ancient woodland. For the past six years we have worked to restore a derelict hazel coppice within these woodlands, and winter 2009 saw our first harvest of the re-growing stools. This was processed into stakes and binders for hedgelaying at Barnett's Wood and Dunorlan Park.

Work continued in the newly established Appledore Wood with the planting of some large standard trees. Our hardy and dedicated volunteers ploughed on through 8 inches of snow to plant a mixture of hornbeam, field maple and wild cherry trees. Pupils from St Matthews later braved the freezing February winds to finish the planting with some oak trees, which they promised to return to show their grandchildren in years to come!



Volunteers and staff

Shaping the Future of Tunbridge Wells' Wildlife

Following a consultation period, the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) will be presented to the Council for consideration in April.

The Plan sets out a framework for conserving, protecting and enhancing all the wildlife of Tunbridge Wells borough for current and future generations – not just the rare species.

Its objectives are:

- To identify habitat and species that are of national and local importance in Tunbridge Wells borough.
- To improve our knowledge of what habitats and species we have, their current condition, the extent and population.
- To identify threats and opportunities to habitats and species within the borough.
- To develop targets and actions to protect and enhance the biodiversity within Tunbridge Wells borough.
- To form and maintain Tunbridge Wells Biodiversity Partnership (TWBP) to bring together all action taking place for biodiversity in TW borough.
- To increase public understanding and awareness of biodiversity and to encourage participation in conservation work.
- To promote the long-term protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Tunbridge Wells borough and in particular to promote environmental education within the borough's schools.
- To target biodiversity action to enable biodiversity to adapt to climate change.
- To raise understanding and awareness of biodiversity conservation within the Council and ensure that the Council has regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in all its actions.

The following habitats within the borough were identified as priority for action, and each has its own set of objectives:

- Lowland Meadows
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Heathland
- Built up Areas and Gardens
- Hedgerows
- Lowland Woodland Pasture and Historic Parks and Gardens
- Rocky Outcrops
- Gill Woodland

To get involved and find out more about the LBAP visit the website at www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/lbap.

Ian Johnstone
Partnership officer (Countryside)



Sandstone outcrop habitat

Barnett's Wood LNR, Tunbridge Wells

Our work in 2009 at Barnett's Wood focused on making the most of the reserve for the local community, through looking after its important habitats, and keeping an exciting events programme going. This meant that, during 2009, practical work was done to improve the wildflower meadow areas, keep the pathways and edges of the woodland in trim, and improve access throughout. A special grant from the Friends of Barnett's Wood paid to replace a derelict wooden boardwalk with a long-lasting recycled plastic walkway. Volunteers also continued to survey the amphibians and reptiles that live on the reserve.

The coming year will see us working closely with the Friends to involve the wider community in making the most of Barnett's Wood, including another vibrant season of summer events.

Cinderhill Woods, Matfield

Work continues to link up this ancient woodland and heathland site with the neighbouring Kent Wildlife Trust reserve, and open new access routes for riders and walkers. Volunteers and students from Hadlow College have installed over 200 metres of fencing and the first of a new set of access-friendly gates. We expect the project to be completed by the end of May, when we'll be celebrating the changes with a launch event.

Autumn 2009 saw a windfall of events, with 'Appley Adventures' celebrating the fruit growing traditions of Kent, Dormouse discovery walks, and a Fungal Foray with Bryan Bullen. Our upcoming events programme will include a chance to experience some of the nightlife at Cinderhill, as we camp out for a 'Survival Challenge' in the woods.

We hope to see you soon!



Wild About Gardens 2009 winners

Biodiversity is the spice of life!

2010 has officially been named The International Year of Biodiversity by the United Nations. Biodiversity is the variety of life on planet earth...from tiny tadpoles to the species of plants in our back gardens- it is all around us everyday. And as human beings we are an essential part of biodiversity as we can have such a strong effect on it-good and bad. This year is your chance to learn more about this rich tapestry of life around us and to get involved with special events and workshops running across the county. Follow the link Countryside 2010 from our website www.khwp.org.uk

2009 has seen an outstanding success in Tunbridge Wells Borough for biodiversity, with so many people entering and winning awards for Kent Wildlife Trust's 'wild about gardens' competition. Schools, offices and local residents all entered by making their gardens more wildlife friendly.

This year we are hoping to run the competition once more so you could do your bit for the international year of biodiversity by giving your garden a wildlife make-over. For further information on 'wild about gardens' contact KHWP.

Gemma Grant
Partnership Officer (Assistant)



Crane Valley Strongest Volunteer Competition