Friends of Portsdown Hill Newsletter

MAY 2023

Welcome to spring and summer on Portsdown Hill

Spring got off to a slow start this year but the seasonal indicators put in a welcome appearance. Swallows returned and cowslips flowered in unusual abundance. However, all research suggests there are fewer species and fewer individuals of each species. Over recent decades biodiversity has been reduced as habitat is lost.

It is difficult to comprehend how abundant wildlife was in the environment of our ancestors. Historic writers such as Gilbert White in the 18th century suggest there was much more. The distribution maps of species gives us a clue when it can be shown that species are now absent from areas that had healthy numbers a century ago. Museum collections confirm this.

When we led lives more in contact with the natural world and there was more natural world to be in contact with, the seasonal appearance of wildlife was sufficiently commonplace to be attached to specific days. Good examples are St George's Mushroom (April 23rd) and St Mark's Fly (April 25th). Perhaps we should have a new generation of species emergence dates for modern times. The problem is finding enough species to associate with a date and the unpredictable weather means each year is so different.





St Marks Fly and St Georges Mushroom species that appear in the last week of April



Carder bumble bee on a knapweed

Something we are likely to see during a FIT count

There are lots of ways to monitor wildlife, we walk butterfly and bumblebee transects. We carry out plant surveys. Over the course of the summer we shall be doing some more relaxed surveys—flower-insect timed counts (FIT Counts). The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme have devised a simple approach to gathering information on our pollinating insects. In brief sit by a patch of flowers on a reasonably nice day and count the insects that turn up and send in the data. Do it at home, in a park or on the hill. Full details at www.ukpoms.org.uk

On the Web

www.portsdown.org.uk/ The FoPH website.
www. havantnature.net/ Wildlife information on Portsdown and further afield.
www. portsdown-tunnels.org.uk Portsdown's underground history.

Contact Details
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Walks and Events Meet at Fort Widley*





Early Summer Flowers * Thursday June 8th 10.00am - 1.00pm

The flowers (and insects) of early summer should be on display.

Summer Barbeque * Wednesday July 12th

FoPH BBQ at Fort Widley BBQ essentials will be on hand and barbequed vegetarian fare will be available. Feel free to bring your own meat to cook if you wish. From 6.30 p.m., members to be advised nearer the time.

Harvest amble * Thursday August 3rd 10.00am – 3.00pm

An excursion over the hill and back through the village of Southwick.

Greet a Grasshopper Event Friday 25th August 10.00—12.00pm **(We shall meet on site, location confirmed on booking)**

A family event where we shall be checking out insects such as beetles, grasshoppers and bushcrickets along with other grassland wildlife.

Expect to go catching minibeasts and find out what they are called. Supervised children welcome. Call or email for further information.



Meadow grasshopper



Great Green Bushcricket