Friends of Portsdown Hill Newsletter

SEPT 2024

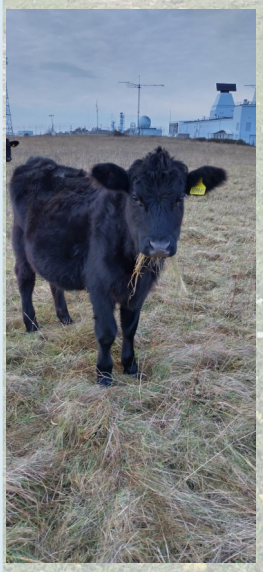
Welcome to Autumn on Portsdown Hill

We are well and truly into Autumn, as iconic summer's-end plants such as Autumn Ladies tresses and Autumn Gentian have now flowered and faded. Summer visitors like Swallows and Chiffchaffs are stocking up on insect protein prior to heading south and passage migrants like Wheatears rest a while before heading off in the same direction. Behavior patterns of migratory birds have developed over many centuries but there have been massive environmental changes in the last 80 years. Migrating birds seem resilient in the face of unfavorably changed landscapes here, where they winter and all the territory between. With the extra difficulty of changed seasonal weather patterns it is remarkable they are still so abundant.

We were able to graze the SSSI and the Top Field last winter and the grassland responded with flowery displays that will persist into October. The characteristic summer butterfly species put in an appearance but in many cases numbers were low. There will be, and there always will be, good and bad years for the species we care for but the important thing is to retain a habitat for them so when they have a a good year it's a really good year.



Chiffchaff on the look out for insects



Cattle doing some good works

Despite years of scrub clearance there are still too many bushes and brambles advancing over the site so we will be thinning them out to ensure the rare grassland is protected and connected. We are concentrating on making corridors for grassland habitat and revealing historical landscape features from Portsdown's past. For most of the last 1000 years there was very little scrub on the hill, we aim to have more than the historic average but not enough to threaten the viability of the remaining chalk grassland.

Brown hairstreak butterfly numbers have continued to increase and they are now common enough to appear on our butterfly transects. Lets hope that they continue to thrive and they are joined by many individuals of the 28 other species we regularly get and the half dozen currently extinct or returning from extinction or vagrant butterflies that surprise us from time to time.

Richard Jones

Countryside Officer



Brown Hairstreak, now a common sight on the hill

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

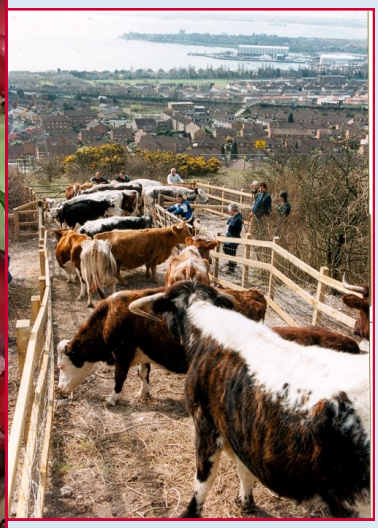
Friends of Portsdown Hill
C/O Portsdown Hill Countryside Service
Fort Widley
Portsdown Hill Rd
PO6 3LS
02392389623
richard.jones2@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Talks — Between October and April we meet on the second **Tuesday** of the Month at the Church of the Resurrection Hall, Brecon Avenue, Drayton, PO6 2AW. Starting at **7.30pm**. £3.00 on the door - includes refreshments.

Tuesday October 8th

30 years of conservation on Portsdown - Richard Jones

A reflection on the efforts to conserve the hill's habitats. In the early 1990s the hill was a challenging urban fringe site with a super-abundance of scrub, no prospect of grazing and its characteristic wildlife, (that requires grazing), in retreat. The ratio of scrub to grassland has changed and so have most of the people involved in the work. Some highs and lows will be described.





Tuesday November 12th

Save our Sparrows - Harry Munt

The importance of these charming birds and what can be done to conserve them.



Walks Meet at the East gate of Fort Widley

Fungi foray

Thursday, 24th October 10.00— 13.00

We shall head off into the woods and fields and see what mushrooms await us.

