



Steyning Downland Scheme Newsletter

Special Slimline July Edition!

Lower Horseshoe Ash Trees



Local contractor, [John Burgess](#) has begun removing the Ash trees we felled earlier in the year at the Lower Horseshoe (off Newham Lane). The work involves large lorries and tractors trundling around, so please take extra care when walking the footpath. The clearance is likely to take a couple of months or more, depending on the weather conditions.

Bird Surveyors Reach 98 Species!



Our amazing team of birders notched up yet another species on the Steyning Downland Scheme last month, bringing the all-time total to a tropical rain forest-challenging 98 species.

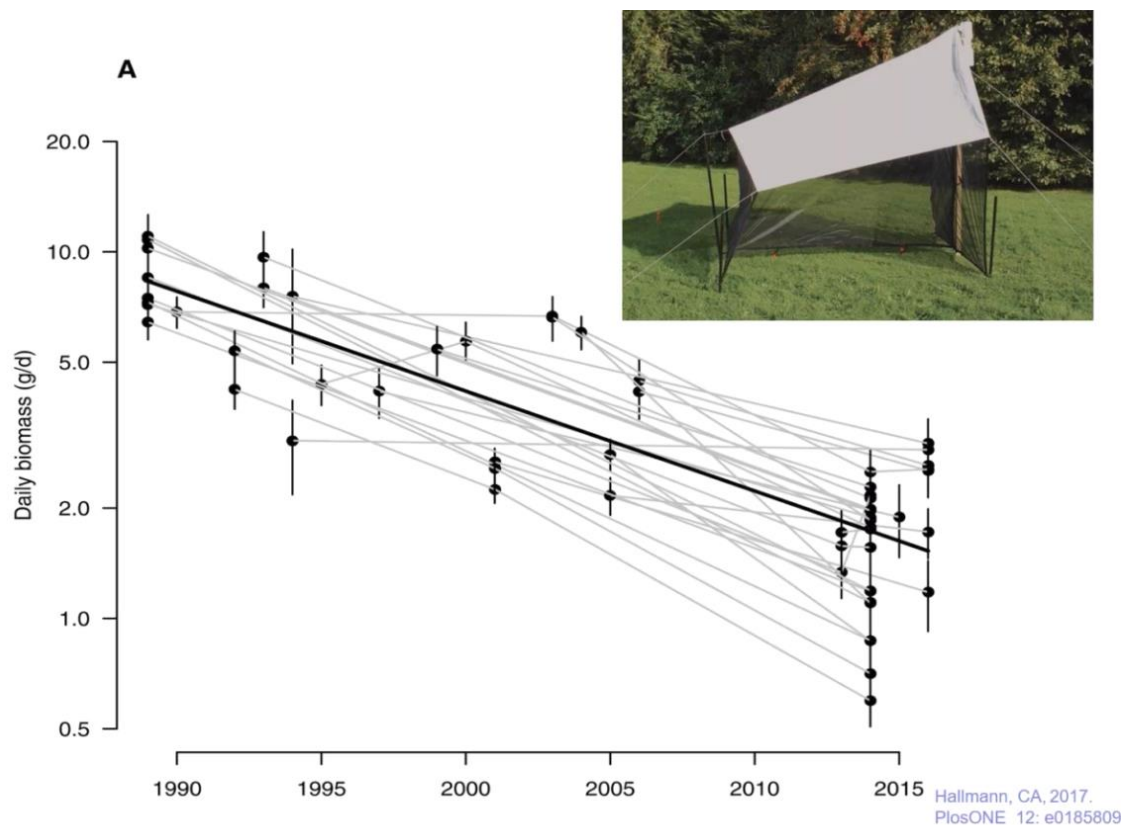
The latest addition to the list is Nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*). Two of these weird and wonderful birds were first spotted by birder team members, Colin and Janet Holter. True to their name, Nightjar fly after dusk. The males make an extraordinary 'churring' call, that sounds rather like an idling 1950s Fiat 500, with the unlikely aim being to attract a mate.

It seems our Nightjar failed to impress any passing females and have since moved on, leaving the team just two new species off the ton! If you'd like to join the search, [just e-mail Bob Platt](#) - all levels of experience welcome (but please note:

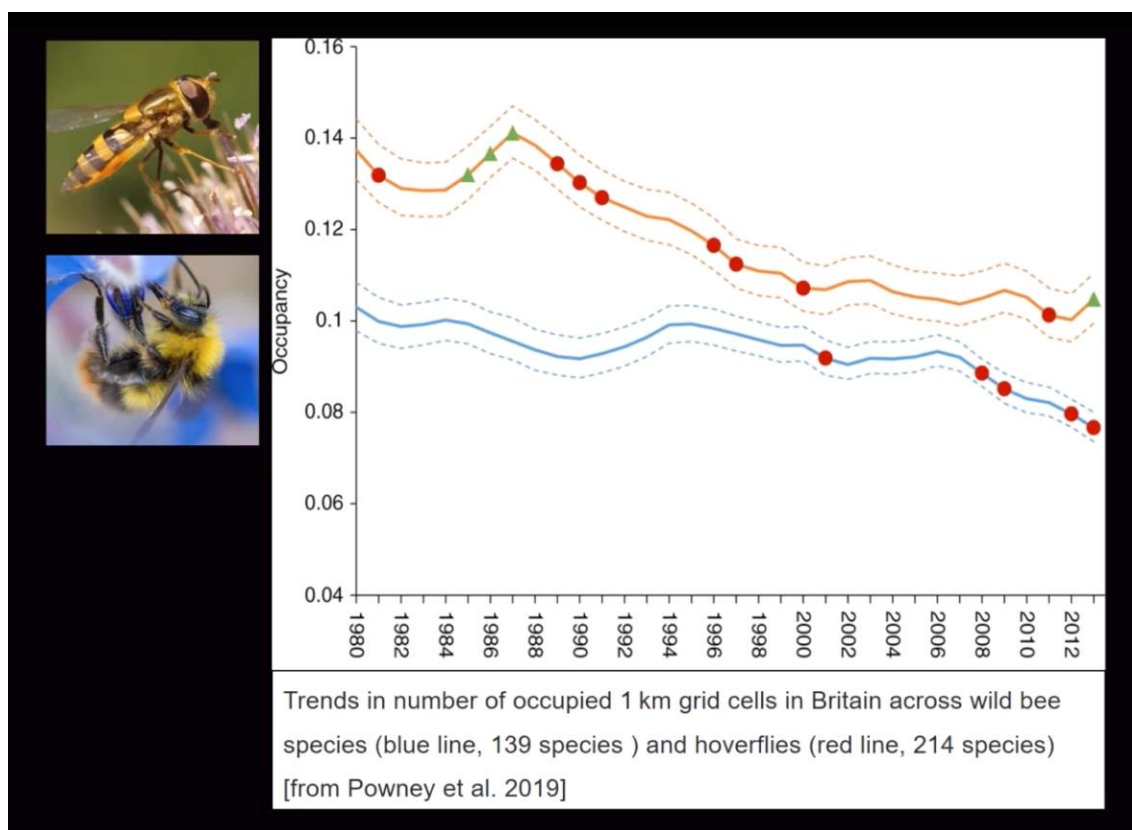
the normal field meetings aren't happening at the moment due to the Covid-19 restrictions).

Insects in trouble: What you can do . . .

Last week your Venerable Editor attended a virtual lecture entitled 'Averting the Insect Apocalypse' by Prof Dave Goulson from Sussex Uni. The talk painted a rather desperate picture for our insect life. True to form, your V.E. dutifully snatched a couple of screen grabs during the talk, just for our dedicated readers:



The rather complicated looking graph above illustrates that the weight of all insect life at 63 nature reserves in Germany fell by 76% in the 27 years up to 2017. That's particularly shocking because the samples were made in the best managed sites for wildlife, were regardless of habitat type and the sites sampled are spread across the whole of Germany. Before someone starts singing 'Come on England', apparently the picture is very similar here in the UK too (the photo is of the 'tent' used to trap the insects). [Go here for the full detail.](#)



Back in good ol' Blighty, you might be interested to know that if you've visited any 1km square of countryside in the UK this year, there will have been 12 fewer species of hoverfly living there (on average) than there were back in 1980. [For the full picture, please go here.](#)

Prof Goulson used much of his talk to explain what we ourselves can do, that collectively will help to avert the 'insect apocalypse'. And that segways perfectly to our Friends, [Greening Steyning](#) who have launched an online survey, aimed at all Steyning and Upper Beeding residents, to find out what changes people would like to see in the local area by 2030. There's lots of questions about conserving biodiversity, so it's well worth a look. Just click on their logo below to go to the survey. Please note: The deadline for completing the survey is **THIS FRIDAY!**





Above: Gilbert Saunders trying out a WW2 telephone at the Targets during the SDS open day in 2019.

Sadly we learnt last week that Gilbert Saunders had passed away. Gilbert had first hand experience of the Steyning Rifle Range when it was used as a training area during WW2 and was instrumental in helping us to piece together its history. We'll always be grateful to Gilbert for his support to the Steyning Downland Scheme. Our sincere commiserations to his family and friends.

Thanks for reading - don't forget you can make a real difference to our work, simply by clicking here to join the Friends - it costs as little as £2 per month!



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