



Steyning Downland Scheme Newsletter

**Welcome to our
November News!**



Photos of the Month: Thanks to Pete Varkala for this close-up shot of a Marsh Tit, spotted on Steyning Coombe. Marsh Tits are very similar to Willow Tits, but if you can get close enough, you'll notice they have polished up their black caps, whereas Willow tits prefer to stay scruffy. Marsh Tits are a Red List species in the UK, meaning their numbers here have been dropping rapidly.



Pete also took this shot of a Treecreeper. Treecreepers are quite common, but easily missed. They like to work their way up tree trunks, looking for their insect food. Nuthatches on the other hand tend to work their way down - nobody is quite sure what would happen if the two happened to meet in the middle ...

. . . and this wonderful photo of a Stonechat is also one of Pete's, again from Steyning Coombe. Their claim to fame is that they do a striking impersonation of two flints being banged together well, have you tried it?:



One last shot of Pete's from Steyning Coombe, this time of a Magpie Inkcap. Not a brilliant impersonation of a Magpie you might think - but count your valuables after walking past one



This sneaky fox shot was taken by Bertie Harding, who's roared onto the scene with some great wildlife photography - check out his Instagram page at: [bh_wildlifephotography](https://www.instagram.com/bh_wildlifephotography).



To show off your nature photos from the Steyning Downland Scheme, just post them on our WhatsApp Group [\(link here\)](#) - they may even be chosen to feature in this illustrious publication.

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Upcoming Events



WOODLAND SINGING:

Unmoved by the onset of wintery weather, Rebecca Askew is running two more open air singing sessions! The red-letter dates for your diary are:

[Sunday November 21st, 2pm -](#)

[Book Here](#)

[Sunday 12th December, 2pm -](#)

[Book Here](#)



CHRISTMAS WREATHS are back! A fun time at The Star Inn for all the family! Join Elfie and the team on Saturday 11th December from 10.30am. Learn to make homemade wreaths from locally harvested, sustainable materials. Pre-booking

[essential - for full details and
to book - go here!](#)

Videos of the Month

Back in the heady summer days of July, the Steyning Downland Scheme brought together a group of 18 young people with a team of professional film makers and a graffiti artist, mixed them up, stood well back and watched to see what would happen.

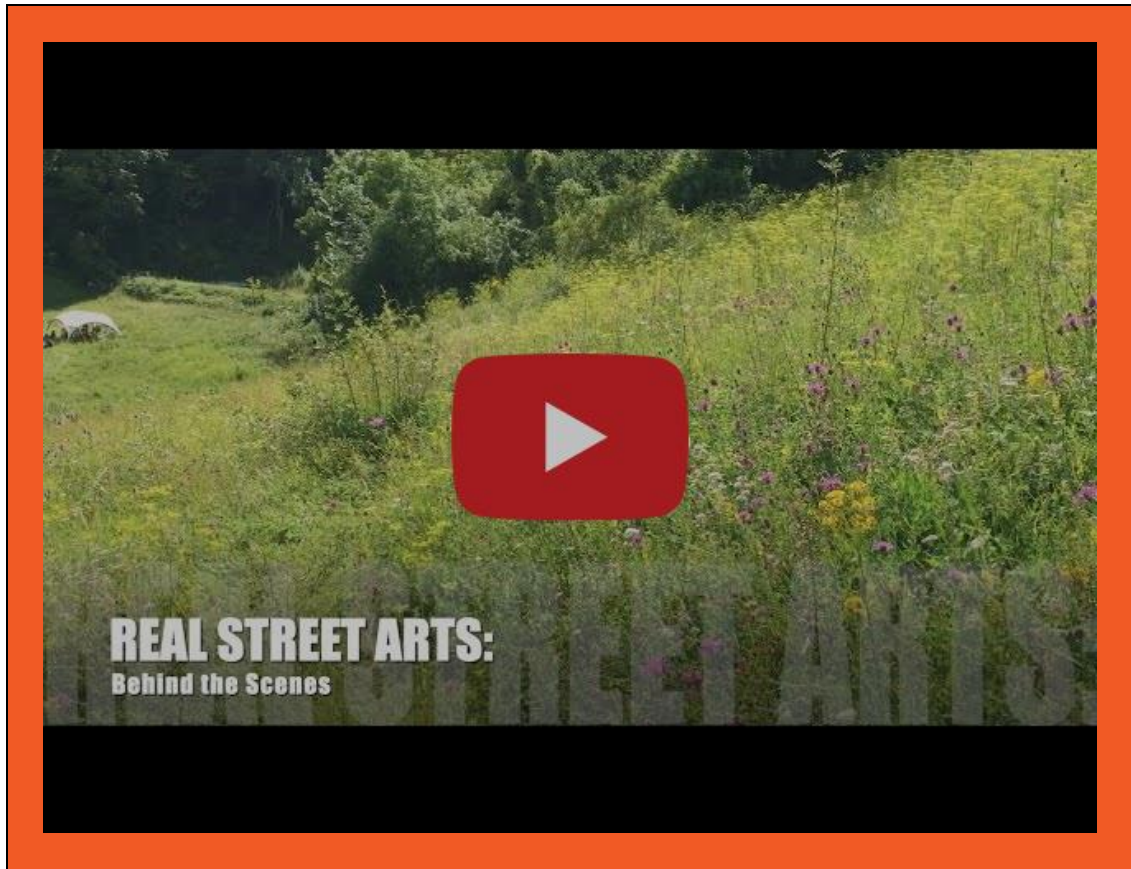
The hope was that they would explore nature, film and art together and in so doing, engender a fresh interest in the natural world.

Well, things didn't quite work out according to plan, but everyone had a fantastic time anyway. The young people worked on sound recording, film making and acting and even produced a short movie - and it even has nature bits in it! Its world premier happened in a 'megayurt' on the Rifle Range last Friday, where vast quantities of pizza were also consumed.

Special thanks to all the young people involved, to Emma Vernon-Harcourt of Urban Myths, to Sarah Gillings and specially to The

Anchor Foundation, who wonderfully funded the entire project. You can watch the result (and the 'behind the scenes movie too) below:







Dexter Day



A small, advance party of Dexters have been hanging around the Big Picnic Field for a few weeks, but things really started to liven up on 5th November, when we had an invasion of these expert living lawnmowers, briefly boosting our herd to nineteen. Fourteen stayed on and these will be with us right through the winter, grazing down our species-rich grassland, ready for the spring, when they will relocate again to a Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve. Please remember to keep your dog under close control when walking through the Rifle Range - thank you!

Mountain Bike Mayhem



Readers may recall that the last weekend in October had a bit of a blowy day. Normally all would have been fine, but with hundreds of dead Ash trees on their last legs on

the Horseshoe, the result was a LOT of trees down, particularly in and around the mountain biking area. The MTBers are working hard to clear them (special thanks to Paul and Percy) but there's a great deal to do. Please take extra care in the area and avoid it all together on windy days.

Butterfly Report Out



All through the summer, SDS volunteers were out recording butterflies and now the results are in ...

It wasn't a particularly brilliant year for butterflies, mostly due to the cold spring, but the summer species did better and we're please to report that our brand new colony of the Duke of Burgundy has gone from strength to strength! You can [read the full report here](#), with special thanks to Jon Brook,

who did all the number crunching.

(above: Brown Hairstreak by Neil Hulme)

Friends



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but you're just too busy?

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make a real difference to
our work, simply by
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Steyning Downland
Scheme - it's only £2 per
month!

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Friends
here!*



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