



Steyning Downland Scheme

Newsletter

Summer is Here!

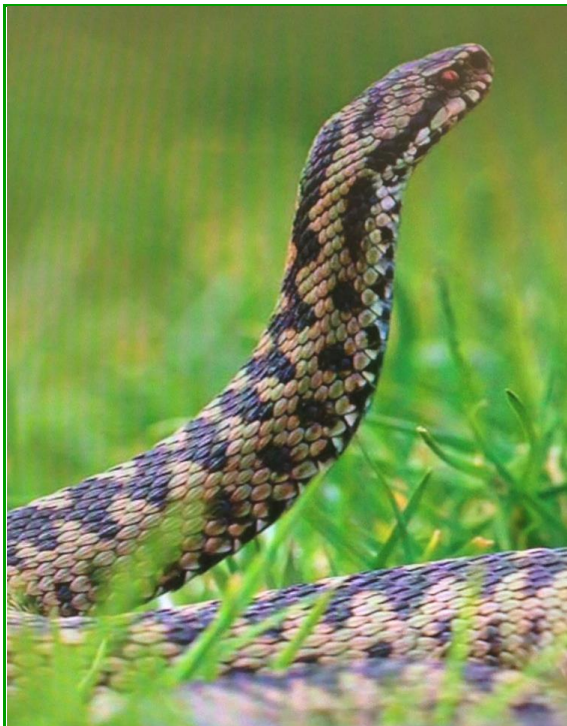


Summer has arrived (well, almost) and life is happening all over the place out on the Steyning Downland Scheme. Surprising though it may seem, the photo above is not of a stellar supernova, but of a tiny ball of European Garden Spider (*Araneus diadematus*) spiderlings, which were hanging precariously in front of the door of the SDS Gateway building this morning. They must have overwintered as an egg sack, hidden somewhere under the wood cladding, and will shortly

split up and paraglide on tiny strands of silk, to land across the countryside and build their webs. . .

Read on to find out about the latest news and some upcoming summerly happenings . . .

Upcoming Events



Adder Amble, this Saturday, 14th May, 10am: Join Paul Stevens, expert herpetologist and leading light with the Sussex Amphibian and Reptile Group, for a morning discovering all about Adders. Price: £6. For more information and to book, [please go here](#) (*booking closes Friday, 6pm, still some places left*)



Conservation Volunteers
'Light', Monday 16th May,
10.30am: We're starting a brand new conservation group, working with Jo Wren, Director of [GROW](#) and [West Sussex Mind](#). The focus is on slowing down and enjoying the downland, as well as doing some practical jobs, and it will run in tandem with the regular Cons Vols. No prior experience necessary and it's FREE. For more information and to book, [please go here](#).



**Songs of the Dawn 'Light',
Thursday 19th May, 7.00am:**

Continuing the 'light' theme, this coming Thursday we'll be running our second Songs of The Dawn, with a stripped down breakfast (hot drink and a croissant) and a cheaper price! Rest assured, all the same birds will be there though - we recorded Nightingale, Cetti's Warbler, Raven and 19 other species last Saturday. Price: Just £7.50. To book, [please go here.](#)



**Songs of the Dawn #2,
Saturday 28th May, 7.00am:**

This is the 'full on' version of our Songs of the Dawn walk, accompanied by a cholesterol-busting, cooked al fresco breakfast. Led by expert birder, Andrew Armitage, expect a wonderful mix of downland birds too! Prices: £12.50 adults, under 16s free (and under 16s get to eat too).

To book, [please go here.](#)



**Botany Survey, Saturday
28th May, 10.00am:** 28th May looks like being a busy one, with our first botany survey of the year happening on the same day as Songs of the Dawn. Experienced botanists and newbies all welcome. The data collected will be used to direct the future management of our species-rich chalk

grassland - and it's FREE. To
book, [please go here.](#)



**Woodland Singing, Sunday
12th June, 3pm:** Join vocal
coach, Rebecca Askew for
what has become a
wonderfully regular part of the
SDS itinerary. For full details
and to book, [please go here.](#)

The Duke is a-laying



We just *had* to share the fantastic photograph of three minuscule Duke of Burgundy butterfly eggs. They were photographed on the underside of a Cowslip leaf, somewhere on the SDS by Neil Hulme. The population is still small and fragile and so we're keeping the location secret, to avoid excessive trampling by keen butterfly spotters. It's the result of lots of hard work by the SDS volunteers, growing Cowslip plants from seed and managing the habitat for this very rare species - very well done all!



... and something rather bigger than a butterfly has been seen flapping around the SDS recently. This juvenile White-tailed Eagle, named (rather unromantically) as 'G463' by the experts, has a wingspan of over 2m and eats about half a KG of food every day (fish and carrion mostly, small children occasionally). It came from a 2020 release program on the Isle of Wight, although this particular bird is known to have explored as far afield as Holland. For more information, take a look at the [Roy Dennis website](#) (photo credit: Bruce Jordan).

STEYNING FESTIVAL 2022

FRIDAY 27TH MAY - SUNDAY 5TH JUNE



Come along to:

GREEN DAY

Saturday 28th May

11.00-16.45 @ Fletchers Croft

- ◆ Join the children's parade
- ◆ See the EV & e-Bike display
- ◆ Find out about local green initiatives



- ◆ Check out the many stalls & demos
- ◆ Learn about local wildlife hotspots
- ◆ Try some yummy vegetarian street food

- ◆ Join a theatre show inside a giant inflatable whale



Full details at:



BOX OFFICE: THE STEYNING BOOKSHOP TEL 01903 812062

ONLINE TICKETS: WWW.TICKETSOURCE.CO.UK/STEYNINGFESTIVAL

MORE INFO: WWW.STEYNINGFESTIVAL.CO.UK



Steyning Green Day is coming up fast - 28th May in fact (*everything's happening on 28th May!*). The Steyning Downland Scheme cavalcade will be there, with a brand new display and a selection of items to purchase at ridiculously low prices, not to mention the first public showing of the very latest movie from the hugely talented Pete 'The Spielberg' Varkala.

If you've volunteered to help with our stall, thank you very much indeed - we'll be in touch soon with more information. We still have a few time slots left, so do [please contact us](#) if you're available - thank you!

Video of the Month: #1
SGS on the SDS



A very big 'thank you' to Jan Hobson for putting together this video about Year 7 students from Steyning Grammar School and their work on the Steyning Downland Scheme. An equally big 'thank you' to Christine Humphreys and her team who have been organising these inspirational visits each year for many years.

Video of the Month: #2

Pete's Badger Cam



Watch the latest instalment in the life of the SDS's resident family of badgers, brought to you as always by Pete Varkala's badger cam.

Sound Recording of the Month: Nightingale



Click on the photo above, sit back, dim the lights and take a moment to listen to our Nightingale, which has returned from Sub-Saharan Africa specially to sing for us again on Nightingale Lane (off Mouse Lane).

Venerable Editor's Gripe of the Month: Dogs and Ground Nesting Birds

We've decided to wheel out our (rapidly ageing) Venerable Editor, to give him a mercifully short opportunity to waggle his stick and gripe about something through his egg-and-tomato-sauce splattered beard. This time: Ground Nesting Birds.

"Birds don't just nest in trees you know. In fact lots of them have twigged the risk of putting eggs high up on windy branches and have decided to nest on the ground instead. I well remember, when I first joined the SDS many years ago, the delight of seeing a mother Grey Partridge and her young on the slopes of the Rifle Range. Everything would be fine for our canny feathered friends, but for the romping presence of dogs off the lead. The video below is from the RSPB and predictably inferior to our own, but still worth a look. Please click on the photo to watch . . ."



THANK YOU CHALK!

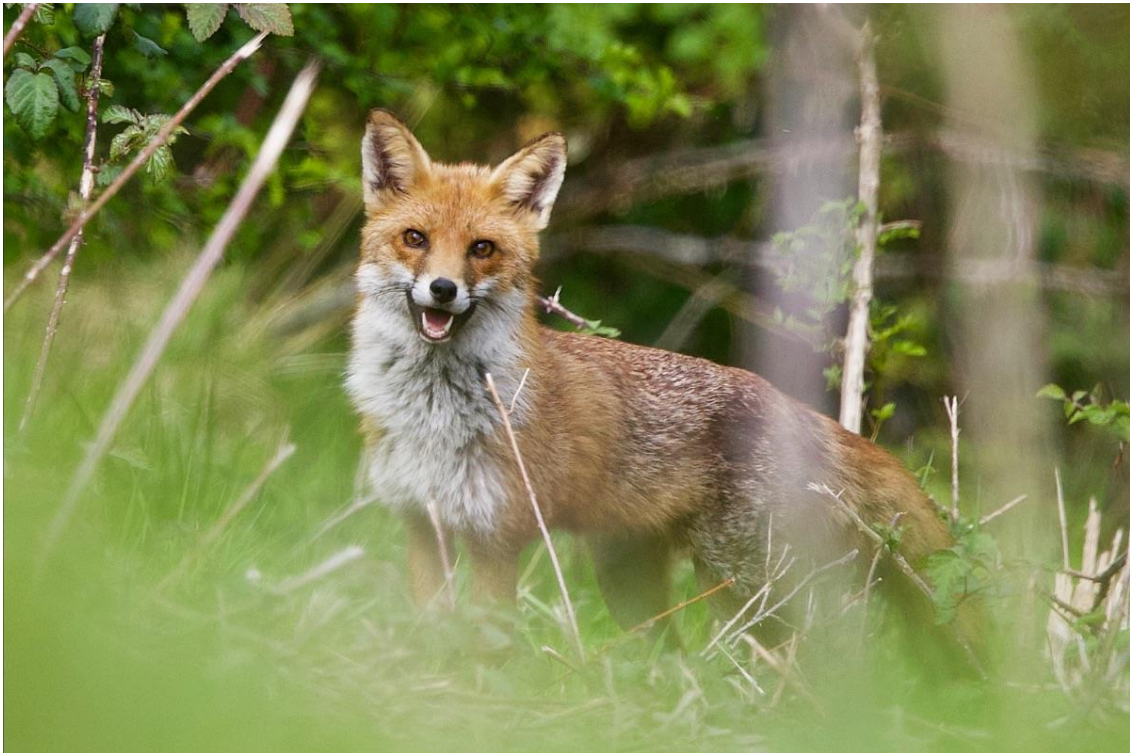


A HUGE and totally unsolicited 'thank you' to the Goring family and to everyone at Chalk. Together they raised an eye-popping £1,754.49 for the SDS between January and April this year. That kind of cash really makes a massive difference to our work. Better still, every time someone buys a meal at Chalk, the SDS cash register 'kachings' yet again - and now they've started serving evening meals! Why not pop over the North Farm on the A24 and give Chalk a go? Better still, forget the weekly food shop and just camp there. [More details here.](#)



We couldn't finish without giving a well deserved plug for Steyning Litter Pickers. They're regularly out, roaming the highways and byways of Steyning, diligently picking up other people's droppings. They're a fantastic bunch and most of them are SDS volunteers too! If you're interested in joining the fun, [contact Sue Glover](#) for more information.

Photo of the Month



This month's Photo of the Month just has to go to Pete V [*is this the Pete Varaka fan newsletter? - Ed*] for this wonderful shot of a fox on the Rifle Range. Pete will be receiving a hearty slap on the back in due course. Don't forget - if you'd like to sponsor our Photo of the Month, so the winner can get a bit more than a

hearty slap on the back, [just let us know](#).

To enter Photo of the Month, just [sign up to the SDS WhatsApp group](#) and post your photos there.

Let's be Friends



Like to help, but just too busy? No problem! You can make a real difference, just by joining the Friends of the Steyning Downland Scheme - it's only £2 per month!



Thanks for reading - enjoy the sunshine!



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