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# Steyning Downland Scheme

The Artful Sponger



Celebrated for its neo-tropical beauty, you can find the Common Spotted Orchid poking up its resplendent flower heads all over the Rifle Range in June. But rather like the infamous Artful Dodger of Oliver Twist fame, it's a bit of a wily customer . . .

For a start those flower heads contain absolutely zero nectar. Granted they look amazing, and all sorts of bees, day-flying moths, and longhorn beetles think so too. But the flowers only mimic the appearance and scent of nectar-bearing plants, without actually providing any reward. Insects visit in hope of a meal and leave rather disgruntled, but liberally dusted with pollen, only to be fooled yet again as they obligingly pollinate the next orchid flower.

Even the seeds are miserly. Each orchid plant produces an awful lot of them, but they're extremely small - a million weigh less than a gram. This remarkably efficient method of seed production is only possible because they don't make an endosperm (the nutrient reserve found in most plant seeds). Instead they use someone else's food, in this case filched from soil mycorrhizal fungi, to germinate and grow.

And the subterfuge doesn't end there - they even bamboozle each other! Recent research has shown that Common Spotted Orchid seedlings grow by intercepting nutrient supplies from their parent plant, fed via their gullible fungal 'friends'.

So by all means admire their beauty, just make sure you check your wallet afterwards . . .

*with thanks to Simon Buck for the photo.*

## June Events



June is botany month on the Steyning Downland Scheme and it's not hard to see why - the chalk grassland will be stacked with colour as

the month draws on.

There's a selection of plant surveys which are open to all - and for those who wouldn't know the difference between a Bird's-foot Trefoil and Cut-leaved Crane's-bill if they met them in the street (unlikely), we have a specially curated [wild flower identification workshop](#) arranged for Saturday 20th June! Just use the buttons below to book your place:

[Wild Flower ID Workshop](#)

[Book all SDS June events here](#)

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## Upcoming Events

Here's a sneaky preview of a couple of the delights in store . . .





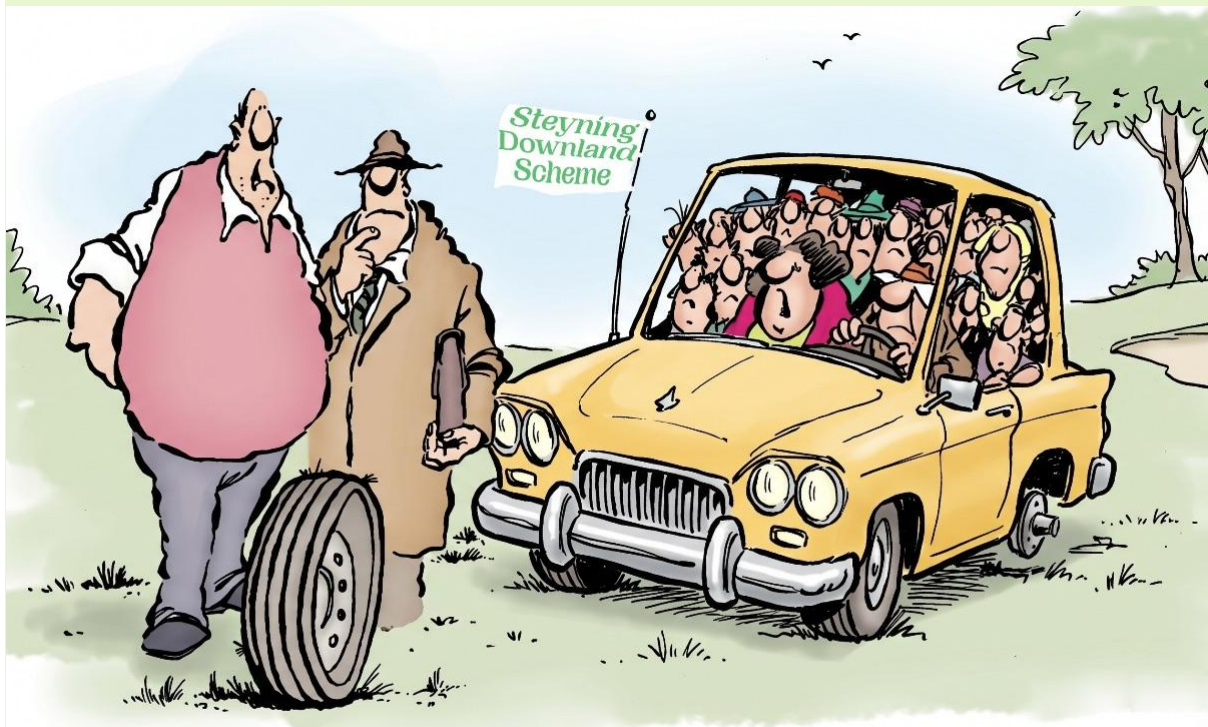
## **BIG Picnic - Saturday 25th July :**

Relocated to its brand new date at the start of the school summer holidays - the long awaited BP looks like being bigger, better and sunnier than ever before! And now you can [book your place in advance here](#).



## **Friends Exclusive Tour of Wiston Gardens - Saturday 18th July,**

**3pm:** Discover the walled garden, the Victorian conservatory and learn about the techniques the professionals use to garden sympathetically with nature. This event is just for the Friends of the SDS, but it's not too late to join them! [Just go here](#).

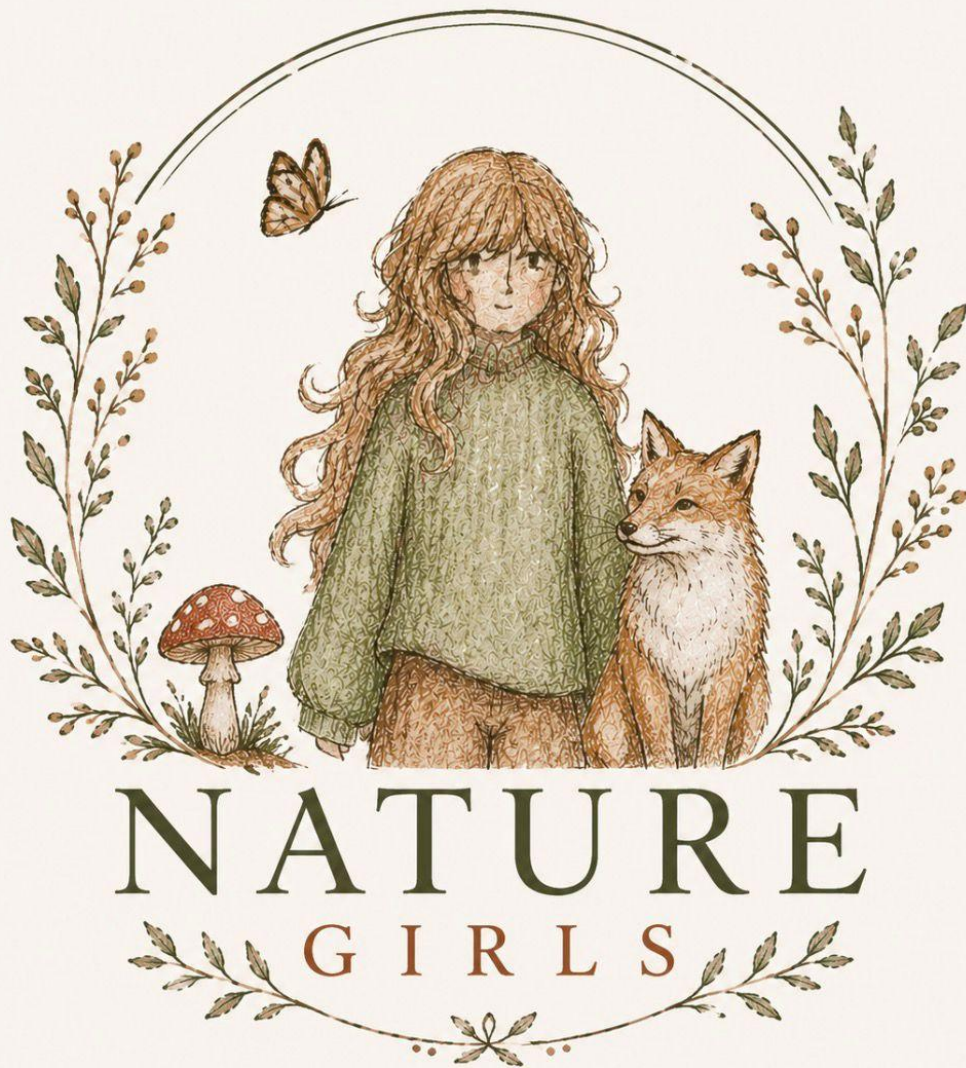


**. . . looks like another job for the Maintenance Team . . . .**

## Access for All . . .

We've launched a brand new initiative (yes another one) to help people to visit the Steyning Downland who may no longer be able to stride up the hills under their own steam. The plan is to purchase an all-terrain accessibility vehicle which we can also use to transport kit around the land for our volunteers. Find out more and perhaps even chip in a fiver below:

Access for All Here



**SDS Nature Girls** is a brand new, weekly after-school group for girls aged 11–16 who sometimes feel a little different, experience anxiety, are neurodivergent, struggle with confidence, or would benefit from a space



where they can belong just as they are. And it's FREE!

This welcoming group is for girls who may be looking to make new friends, enjoy spending time in nature, love art and creativity, or simply want to be part of a supportive community. You'll need to book in advance and complete a referral form - for more info., click the link below (places are strictly limited to 8 per session and are already booking up fast):

[Book for Nature Girls Here](#)

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Video of the Month



Follow what's been happening on the SDS during May . . . there's even a rare outdoor appearance of your Venerable Editor, sporting a rapidly developing paunch and a truly magnificent hat .

. .

One last thing . . .



Beth, our very own Youth Engagement Worker is getting married this month! We'd like to give Beth and Dan a bit of a financial boost to help them set up their new home - if you'd like to chip in, just use the link below

...

[Chip in for Beth & Dan here](#)

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With thanks . . .

We are very grateful to the following organisations for their financial support this year:



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*Every little helps*



**COMMUNITY**  
FUND



Rowney Trust



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