

Paiges Press

Summer 2010



Friends of Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadows

The Meadows are looking lovely now with all the buttercups, clover and other wild flowers including common spotted orchids. Paul Lister, who conducts the Moth and Butterfly Surveys, also reports that this year, for the first time, a Green Hairstreak butterfly has been recorded on the Reserve.

Annual General Meeting

The 12th AGM of the Friends of Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadows was held on 13th April 2010 at Haywards Heath Town Hall. In his Chairman's Report, Terry raised concerns about the destruction in Paiges Wood of the common native bluebell, already threatened by the Spanish bluebell in parts of the country, by some people's actions. It is vital that walkers do not remove fencing erected to protect the bluebells and keep to the main paths through the woods.



Bluebells were a favourite flower of one of our founder members, Kathleen Savage, and it is with great sadness the Friends Group report that she passed away in May. Kathleen loved the Nature Reserve and spent many happy hours dog walking through Blunts Wood and over the Meadows. Earlier this year, she sent the Friends Group a piece of Creative Writing she did some years ago. An extract is printed overleaf with husband Keith's permission. It serves to highlight just how much there is to appreciate, whatever the weather, within the Nature Reserve and how fortunate we are to have it in Haywards Heath.

Photographic Competition 2010

The closing date of the Photographic Competition with the theme of "Life in Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadows" has been extended until 28th June. Prizes have kindly been donated by Park Cameras for each category so do take part if you can.

Conservation Work Parties

In March, hedgerows in Parklands were renewed with hawthorn planted as deer are not partial to this. The next work parties planned are:

24th July – Rubbish clearing and cutting back foliage across footpaths.

21st August – Pulling Ragwort

18th September – Pulling Ragwort

Please contact Terry for more information on 01444 451737.

Guided Walks 2010

Sunday, 11th July 2010 at 2.30pm – Watch and Friends Group Bug Hunt

Sunday, 17th October 2010 at 10.00am – Watch and Friends Group Wildlife Tracking

For more information please contact Barbara Woods on 01444 412483.

THE NATURAL WORLD

“Oh no! It’s raining!” How often do we hear this cry? Sometimes it is disappointing to see yet more rain falling – but it doesn’t always have to be bad news. We have a young dog who is not at all interested in the weather – he just loves to go for his walks twice a day, and once adjusted to this routine (making sure we have warm waterproof clothing) there is a lot to be said for walking in the rain.

We are so fortunate in having Blunts Wood and Paiges Meadows Nature Reserve in our town with so many different aspects of the natural world of Sussex. If you are a lover of trees you can follow the seasons through life of the oak, silver birch, ash, hawthorn, beech, alder, hazel, maple and many smaller shrubs – blackthorn, goat willow, elder – many of these being a blaze of blossom and catkins long before others look like waking up at all!

Although we deplored the damage done to so much woodland by the hurricane, an abundance of wild flowers has certainly compensated for this. The tiny wild violets and delicate snowdrops are first to appear, closely followed by primroses, celandines, milk maids, wood anemones – these latter appear as if by magic one warm sunny day like a carpet of stars, when the previous day showed only leaves. Gradually, the bluebells appear in the shady spots, until the woods have a delicate blue carpet wherever one looks – and the scent of bluebells in the rain is so elusive and evocative! In the last week or two greater stitchwort has appeared as white lace round the hedgerows, and the open meadowland has whole areas of pure gold as the buttercups open, other patches covered in sorrel, are a warm dusky red, and the speedwell provides cool, clear pools of blue. Red champions, common bugle, yellow archangel, pink clover and herb Robert attract the eye as they gradually take over from the earlier flowers while early purple vetch and early purple orchids appear among the grasses.

These, too, are growing rapidly – so lush and green – and as the summer progresses we shall see them change as the seed heads develop and ripen, giving such an assortment of shades ranging through all the greens into dusky pinks and mauves. These gentle colours will be highlighted by yellow ragwort and purple knapweed, and if the Council is not too early in cutting the fields we will have more yellow as the flea bane comes to maturity.

Through this time the birds are reacting to the changing seasons. The robins sing throughout the winter by the light of early morning street lamps, and an occasional blackbird is tempted to join in. Gradually, the songs change, and different ones are heard – the blackbird and thrush vie to be the first to greet the dawn, the chaffinches and wrens add their determined cascade of sound and as the weeks go by we hear the wood warbler, chiff chaff, blackcap as they return. The woodpecker is often heard, hammering trees and giving his petulant cry, magpies, crows and rooks fly overhead adding their voices and pheasants and sky larks join in from the farmer’s set-aside fields.

The ponds are busy with growing tadpoles, with pairs of mallards and coots and their offspring, the streams chatter incessantly as they go on their way – no shortage of water this year! Soon we shall see dragon flies, damsel flies and butterflies hovering and fluttering in the sun. Rabbits and squirrels provide plenty of sport for the dogs, though the foxes we sometimes see probably benefit more from these and recently a pair of deer has been spotted gliding into the shade of the woods. There is obviously activity around the badgers’ set – lots of old bedding has been thrown out and much scraping and scrabbling has taken place – but one seldom sees these shy creatures for they prefer to emerge at dusk when the world is a quieter and more peaceful place. Then they can make their snuffling way through the undergrowth on the ever present need to hunt for food and back home to sleep through the daylight hours once more.

All this and much, much more in one small Nature Reserve right on our doorsteps – and just as beautiful in the rain as in the sunshine!

Kathleen Savage
(1st September 1939 – 12th May 2010)