

ASHDOWN FOREST DOG CODE OF CONDUCT

Let's be clear: well-behaved dogs ARE welcome on the Forest. The Forest however, is a very special place; internationally important for the wildlife it supports and loved by a great many people.

In order for our visitors to co-exist with each other and with the plants and animals that make the Forest special, we ask that certain guidelines be followed.

PLEASE REMEMBER

THE 4 'Cs'

CONTROL

Always ensure your dog is in sight and comes back when called. If you are not totally confident of your dog's recall, use a lead.

CARE FOR FARM ANIMALS AND WILDLIFE

Never let your dog approach or chase livestock or wildlife.

CONSIDER OTHERS

Never let your pet approach other people, dogs or horses, uninvited.

CLEAN UP

Always remove your dog waste from pathways and take it home.

Under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 it is a criminal offence for a person to be in charge of a dog dangerously out of control in a public place. Penalties include a fine of up to £20,000 or, in cases resulting in injury, up to 5 years in prison. It is an offence under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953 to allow a dog to attack or chase livestock. If a dog is on enclosed land where there are sheep, it must be kept on a lead or otherwise under close control. Livestock managers are entitled to shoot any dog found attacking grazing animals.

If you are unlucky enough to experience a dangerous or threatening dog, or if you lose your dog or find one loose, then please contact us at the Forest Centre or, in an emergency, contact the police. If you encounter any problems, contact us on: 01342 823583
Local Police: 101 – in an emergency, dial 999



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ASHDOWN FOREST

Celebrating over 125 years of care for the Forest www.ashdownforest.org

life



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DOG CODE OF CONDUCT

SPECIAL "DOGS ON THE FOREST" ISSUE

Welcome...



...to this special edition of Ashdown Forest Life which is devoted to the single topic of dogs and I hope that you will find the articles informative, educational and thought provoking.

In 2012, in response to an increase in dog related incidents on the Forest, the Board of Conservators commissioned a report entitled 'Every Dog Matters'.

This highlighted dog issues both at a local level and on countryside sites nationally. The report concluded with a number of recommendations for the Conservators to take forward and so the Ashdown Forest Every Dog Matters Programme came into being.

To date, from within our own resources and with some funding support from Wealden District Council and the Safer Wealden Partnership, we have:

- Set up the Dog Incident Data Base (to date 324 reports made)
- Held, with the Ashdown Forest Riding Association, 3 rider training events
- Held 3 dog walker training events
- Held 2 "Sheep Proofing Your Dog" training sessions
- Held a free micro-chipping session with the Dogs Trust

- Met with licensed dog walking businesses
- Held 2 "Children and Young People's Dog Care" events with Raystede

In addition we have set up the Ashdown Forest Dog Walkers Forum to consult on and now publish our new Ashdown Forest Code of Conduct for Dog Walkers, a major step forward in promoting responsible dog ownership.

On the back cover you will see the Code comprising 'The 4Cs' message that will also be on leaflets, signs and posters in car parks and public places in and around the Forest — please promote this good conduct message widely to family, friends, neighbours and those you meet out and about on the Forest.

There is still, of course, much to do — we need to secure funding to set up our volunteer Dog Walking Ranger group, develop dog related community events and provide an annual training programme and, with your help, we can help reduce the number of incidents involving dogs on the Forest and make the experience better for everyone.

Pat Buesnel, Director pat@ashdownforest.org

A wonderful environment for everyone



Inset: Code of conduct car park sign



Ashdown Forest is one of Wealden District Council's most precious environments.

Under European Biodiversity Designations, we have a legal duty to ensure that any new development does not cause an adverse environmental impact, particularly during the birds' breeding season which extends from February to August.

To this end, we have been working with the Conservators and neighbouring local authorities of Mid Sussex, Lewes and Tunbridge Wells, to identify ways of ensuring that developers do not damage the Forest's important ecology and wildlife. Developer contributions from new residential schemes will be used to assist the Conservators in their management and conservation work.

Also, the heathland habitat of Ashdown Forest is under the constant threat of disturbance from visitors and dogs that are not kept under close control.

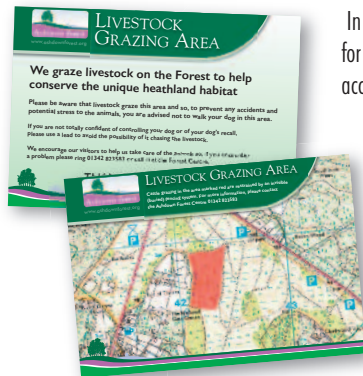
So, alongside what's already being undertaken by the Conservators, we are looking to promote responsible dog ownership. The Code of Conduct for dog walkers is therefore fully supported by the local authorities and its positive implementation will provide the fundamental basis for introducing other access management initiatives such as supporting the staff, providing Volunteer Dog Rangers, events and education. New or improved local green spaces part-funded by developers, will also help take some of the recreational pressure away from the Forest.

It's a new and exciting approach and we are looking forward to supporting the positive work of the Conservators in protecting the flora and fauna that makes Ashdown Forest so special for our local residents.

Wealden District Council

Dogs and Livestock

Grazing by animals is now central to the management of the Forest. Without it, the rolling vistas of heathland and heather would be lost to invasive scrub.



In order to prevent this, it is necessary for livestock to be allowed free-roaming access to certain parts of the Forest.

Now, even normally well-behaved dogs can become excitable in the presence of farm animals, resulting in serious injury to livestock, dogs or both. Remember that you can always call in at the Forest Centre to pick up our Code

of Conduct leaflet and to

find out where the grazing areas are. We have also produced maps and signs clearly identifying those grazing areas and whether they are protected by electric or “invisible” fencing.

Remember, if you are not sure of your dog around livestock please use a lead.



Dogs and Horses

Ashdown Forest is the most wonderful place for both dog walkers and horse riders. Sadly however, there can sometimes be a lack of understanding on both sides as to how to share this space safely.

One of the main problems occurs when a normally well trained dog is off the lead and gives chase when it sees horses. Natural instincts take over, adrenalin gets going and then complete deafness to the recall sets in!

The Ashdown Forest Riding Association (AFRA) is trying to educate riders not to trot or canter past walkers, to give dog owners time to get their dogs under control or on a lead before passing and that the best thing to do if a dog runs up barking or gives chase, is to stand still with the horse facing the dog, which hopefully gives the owner a chance to catch the dog. But if a dog or dogs bark and jump up at a horse, the horse can be so scared that it is impossible to keep it calm as their instinct is to flee from perceived predators. If you are sitting on top of a badly frightened horse, it can be difficult to be polite when the dog owner finally appears and says “don’t worry, my dog doesn’t mind horses”!

Dogs and Horses

The question is whether a horse is confident enough to stand still when faced by a barking dog who is bouncing around in excitement, not the other way round. Of course, this can also be very dangerous to the dog as, if a horse lashes out at a dog nipping at his heels, a kick from a half-ton animal wearing metal shoes could be fatal.

Perhaps the main lesson to be learned is that any dog on the Forest should be under control, either on the lead or under the supervision of the owner. Many dog walkers don't really pay attention — they are listening to music, chatting on mobiles

or talking to friends whilst their dogs run free. Also dog owners should understand that, even if their dogs are trained to the whistle, it could be a very different matter in wide-open spaces.

Most dog walkers and horse riders are considerate people and most problems arise through thoughtlessness or a lack of understanding. Our ideal should be to make Ashdown Forest a safe place for us all to enjoy, simply by respecting other people and their animals.

Ashdown Forest Riding Association



Dogs and Visitors

Please bear in mind that not all our visitors are dog lovers. In particular, the very young and the elderly can become frightened by the actions of strange dogs, however well intentioned.

Dogs themselves vary in their attitude to each other and not all encounters between pets will be friendly. So please keep your dog under control or on a lead if you come across visitors simply wishing to enjoy the peace and quiet of the Forest.

Dogs and Birds

Being a lowland heath, the habitat of Ashdown Forest is rich and diverse and contains many species of flora and fauna some of which are unique to heathland.

At the same time of course, the Forest is also enjoyed by large numbers of us together with our dogs.

Ashdown Forest is a Special Protection Area, a European-level designation recognising the important populations of rare birds found here.



Nightjar

It is vital to remember the effect our pet could be having on the Forest environment when we take our faithful companion out for a walk, because several bird species on Ashdown Forest nest either directly on the ground or very close to it and are therefore particularly prone to disturbance by dogs. These include the Dartford Warbler, Nightjar, Woodlark, Skylark, Woodcock, Yellowhammer, Song Thrush, Tree Pipit and Meadow Pipit, some of which are becoming rarer as breeding species. There are also birds that over-winter here, including Snipe and Jack Snipe. Any disturbance can lead to the loss of eggs or nestlings.

Dog walking is the most common reason for visiting the Forest and people with dogs create a greater disturbance for a longer period of time and over a wider area than other recreational visitors. This is because dogs roam away from

their owners, sometimes entering areas either side of the given path, possibly chasing after wildlife. Birds will interpret a dog as a predator. A bird will desert the nest and then the eggs or young are at a huge risk from opportunistic predators like crows. If the disturbance is too great, birds will just abandon a nest. Dogs are known to reduce the breeding success of rare birds such as the Dartford Warbler and Nightjar which nest on the Forest.

The Forest is a fantastic wild leisure resource for thousands of people, and there is room for everyone, including dog walkers, but it is also a delicate ecosystem and it is reasonable to ask that dog walkers control their animals and discourage them from straying too far from paths.

Peter Johnson
Ashdown Forest Bird Group

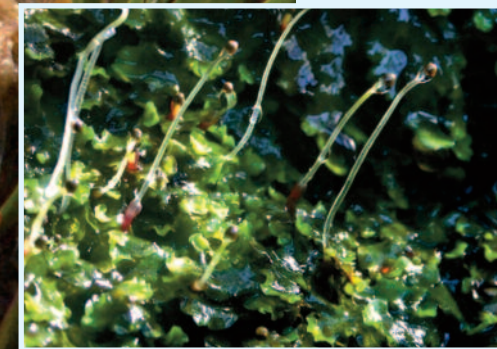


A healthy bog environment

Dogs and Waste

Ashdown Forest is particularly rich in bryophytes (mosses and liverworts).

There are numerous boggy areas where many types of Sphagnum can be found and most trees have several different kinds of moss on them. In total, 250 species are currently known here, which is about half of those in the whole of Sussex. Most of these lower plants are associated with damp habitats — ghylls and valley mires — but one habitat that is often ignored is the edges of paths and sandy rides.



This is the home for several scarce liverworts including *Nardia scalaris* (Ladder Flapwort), *Jungermannia gracillima* (Crenulated Flapwort) and *Gymnocolea inflata* (Inflated Notchwort). At one time these were common but they are sensitive to any sort of pollution and various factors, including increased vehicle numbers on the roads, but also many more

Inset: Liverwort



Dogs and Waste

dogs in recent years, have led to them now being restricted to just a few places.

Unlike most of the waste deposited on the Forest by deer, sheep, cattle and horses, dog faeces is high in nitrogen as a result of their protein diet. Dogs are also generally fed away from the Forest, so their waste represents an importation of nutrients rather than a recycling of nutrients that were already present here. Most people, particularly gardeners, would assume increased nutrients were a good thing, but many rare plant species are poor competitors and are easily crowded out by more aggressive species; increased nutrients can give those aggressive species an unfair advantage.

This is just one reason why it is important to always pick up after your dog.

And if you do, PLEASE don't drop the bag or hang it in a tree!

Steve Alton
Conservation Officer

FORTHCOMING FRIENDS' EVENTS

Sunday 19th April 2015 - A Bird Walk on the Ashdown Forest

9.00 a.m. Meet at Old Lodge car park

Members of the Ashdown Forest Bird Group will lead us as they point out birds that can be seen and heard that morning.

Thursday 14th May 2015 - Gardening for Wildlife

2.00 p.m. in the Education Barn, Ashdown Forest Centre

An illustrated talk by Conservation Officer Steve Alton.

Sunday 7th June 2015 - A Field Walk in Pippingford Park

2.30 p.m. at Millbrook East car park

Another chance to see the wildlife, iron workings, pillow mounds and wartime earthworks in an area not open to the public. Some rough walking so please bring stout footwear and suitable protective clothing. Places are limited to 25 for this 3 hour walk. Please note this visit is subject to there being no military activity that afternoon.

Thursday 2nd July 2014 - A Nightjar Walk

9.00 p.m. location to be decided.

The Ashdown Forest Bird Group has again invited us to join them as they spot Nightjars on the Forest. Please note the start of this walk will be decided in the days before the walk.

For further information and to book a place on any of the above events, please contact Pat Arnold on **01892 611414** or email ashdownfriends@aol.com.

DIARY DATES

Tuesday 21st April 2015 - Poets Walk and Workshop

10.30am - 1.30pm at the Forest Centre

Until 15th June 2015 - 'Trees' by Bleau-Shanay Hudson

Bleau's paintings are inspired by her local surroundings including the Ashdown Forest. The exhibition is open during Forest Centre opening hours.

Sunday 26th July 2015 - Ashdown Forest Landscape Archaeology looking for clues in the wood

2pm - 4.40pm at the Forest Centre £2.50 per family

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We are grateful to Natural England for supporting Ashdown Forest Life.

This site is part of the European Natura 2000 Network. It has been designated because it hosts some of Europe's most threatened species and habitats. All 27 countries of the EU are working together through the Natura 2000 Network to safeguard Europe's rich and diverse natural heritage for the benefit of all.
See www.natura.org.



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