



# SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

## WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Happy Nature, Happy South Downs** Find out about our new photo competition with a theme of capturing those joyful moments in the National Park.
- **Spectacular Stanmer** Find out about the multi-million-pound restoration that has transformed a key gateway to the National Park.
- **Restoration and replenishment** Learn about the Authority's new Health and Wellbeing Strategy that aims to explore the benefits of green spaces for both mental and physical health.
- **It's National Walking Month!** Find out about a revamped trail that's ready to be explored.

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## Happy Days! Enter our new photo competition for chance to win £250

**The South Downs National Park photo competition returns for 2021, with a first prize of £250 on offer to the amateur or professional photographer who best captures this year's theme of "Nature Makes Me Happy".**

Judges will be looking for uplifting images that capture the beauty of the natural world – whether that be landscape, wildlife, rivers and coastline, woodland, a piece of history, or people enjoying the National Park. The broad theme could also cover those "happy places" in the South Downs that replenish the soul.

The top prize for the adult category will be £250, with a runner-up prize of £150, third prize of £100 and fourth prize of £50.

The youth competition returns this year for budding young photographers – with categories 10 years and under and 11 to 17. There will be a prize of a family pass



to Marwell Zoo for the 10 years and under category, while the prize for 11 to 17 category will be a family pass for a Forest Segway outdoor adventure ride at Go Ape.



Award-winning photographers Rachael Talibart, Finn Hopson and Carlotta Luke also return to the judging panel.

Nick Heasman, Countryside and Policy Manager at the South Downs National Park, who chairs the judging panel, said: "We're excited to be able to launch our 2021 photo competition and we've got a fantastic theme this year that we think will really resonate with people.

"It's been a challenging 12 months for so many people, but one thing is for sure – nature brings a smile to the face. Those experiences in the natural world, whether it be walking in a beautiful green space, seeing a majestic bird in the sky and going for a jog in the woods, have really inspired people.

"We'll be looking for images that capture how uplifting the South Downs can be. We'll also be keen to see if people can depict their 'happy place' in a spectacular photograph."

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY Spectacular Stanmer!



Carlotta Luke, who is based in Lewes, said: "I am so pleased to be part of the judging panel again for the photography competition. We've got a great new theme this year so I can't wait to see what people send in to us. I live in the midst of the South Downs and the landscape and wildlife here certainly make me happy.

"I know they do for many people, especially during the challenging year that we have had, so please send us your photos that show this!"

Rachael Talibart said: "Nature can be such a respite from troubled times and where better to enjoy it than the beautiful South Downs National Park. I'm really looking forward to enjoying lots of uplifting photographs from this special place."

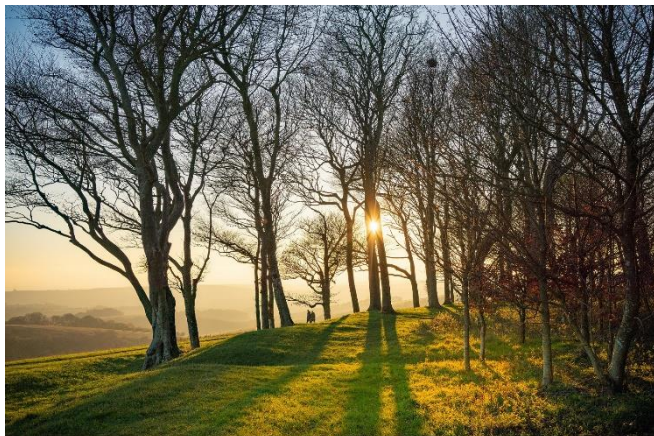


Entries close on Sunday 31 October. Find out more and download the entry form at

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photocompetition2021/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photocompetition2021/)

Photographers can visit

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoying-happy-times-and-helping-nature-to-happily-flourish/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoying-happy-times-and-helping-nature-to-happily-flourish/) for advice on making the most out of their visit to the National Park.



Last year's winner "Chanctonbury Ring" by Tim Kahane



"Jump for Joy" - by Richard Howorth. Winner of 2013 photo competition



**New pathways and trails and a beautifully-restored walled garden are among the attractions at a Sussex countryside estate that has undergone a major restoration.**

Construction of the £5.1m restoration of Stanmer Park is now complete, giving a new lease of life to Brighton and Hove's largest park, nestled among tranquil woodlands and lush green open spaces within the National Park.

Work to restore and protect some of the estate's most important heritage and listed features, as well as develop new ways to share its rich and fascinating history with a wider audience, has been underway since 2019.

The project was able to go ahead thanks to a £3.8m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, together with financial and other support from Brighton & Hove City Council and partners Plumpton College and the South Downs National Park Authority.

Opened to the public at the beginning of April, Stanmer's restored walled garden has the real wow factor. Formerly the kitchen garden for the park's iconic Stanmer House, and until recently the city council's Nursery, it is now leased to Plumpton College, which have transformed the area into an exciting new public attraction, *One Garden Brighton*.

Visitors can wander among themed garden areas designed by landscape architect Dominic Cole, who worked on the Eden Project, and browse in the farm shop and glasshouses. Interpretation boards exploring some of the historic themes that have shaped Stanmer life for more than 5,000 years are being installed, along with wind-up "listening posts" where visitors will be able to listen volunteers recount their park memories.

New pathways and trails, plus an off-road route alongside the central driveway, give visitors a fresh perspective on the park's sweeping 18th Century designed landscape.

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the Authority, said: "Stanmer Park is a key gateway to the National Park and it's wonderful to see it lovingly restored. One Garden Brighton is a great new addition to the National Park – an impressive balance of education, commerce and recreation in the restored Georgian walled garden."

# Nature's medicine: Major new health and wellbeing plan is unveiled



## A groundbreaking plan has launched to make the South Downs National Park a "natural health service" for the South East.

Coinciding with **Mental Health Awareness Week**, the National Park's first Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out a bold vision to connect more people with nature to help improve both mental and physical health.

The plans include working with GPs, healthcare and community-based providers to deliver more opportunities for "green social prescribing". Sometimes called community referrals, a GP or social prescriber may refer a patient for non-clinical services that boost health, such as walking or cycling in the South Downs, becoming involved in arts-based activities or surveying wildlife.

The long-term strategy also identifies priority areas in the region where the Authority will work with communities, partners and healthcare providers to help more people discover the wellness benefits of the National Park.

It comes as robust research shows that spending time in green spaces has a measurable positive impact on people's health. The growing evidence shows that people who have accessed green spaces report a reduction in stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression. Last month **an ONS study** reported that more than 40% of people say nature, wildlife and visiting local green spaces have been even more important to their wellbeing since the coronavirus restrictions began.

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy was approved by Members of the National Park Authority at a meeting in March.



Kate Drake walking in the South Downs

Kate Drake, Health and Wellbeing Officer for the National Park, said: "We've long known that National Parks are places for escape, adventure, enjoyment and inspiration.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

"But we also know that these amazing natural assets, including the South Downs, are underused in terms of the benefits they offer for people's health and wellbeing and in particular those dealing with stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness.

"We've only really scratched the surface of what the South Downs National Park can offer as part of a natural health service and that's why our first Health and Wellbeing Strategy is so important.

"It clearly sets out our stall of what we want to achieve over the next decade – becoming a hub for health and wellbeing opportunities for communities across the region.

"A key part will be working with partners and healthcare providers on specific projects, but we must not also forget that a big part of this is about engagement. We want to start by planting the seed that getting out into nature is beneficial on many levels. This strategy will help that grow and we're really excited to get started."

Key goals of the strategy include:

- Develop projects and collaborations that link to the "NHS Five Ways to Mental Health and Wellbeing" – be active, keep learning, give to others, connect and be mindful.
- Work to give access to nature and green space to new audiences, including those from areas of deprivation, young people, people with disabilities, and those from black and ethnically-diverse communities.
- Develop with partners a range of activities that provide opportunities for physical activity, connecting with the landscape through arts and heritage and volunteering opportunities.
- Develop "taster days" to show people the wide range of benefits of nature-based activities.
- Providing up-to-date and user-friendly information to health professionals across the region so they can better understand the National Park and how to access it for health and wellbeing.

Kate added: "We've set some ambitious goals and one of the keys will be partnership working. We really want to bring individuals and organisations on this journey with us and hope that in five years' time many more people will be looking to this amazing natural space on their doorstep as a way to boost mental and physical health."

The National Park has started up a dedicated website section, which will be developed further to provide resources for both the public and professionals on health and wellbeing. It includes tips on topics such as forest bathing and covers examples of some of the project work. Visit [www.southdowns.gov.uk/health-wellbeing/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/health-wellbeing/) for more information and details of how to get in touch with the Authority.

The full health and wellbeing strategy can be read [here](#) and a useful summary is [here](#). The work forms one of the 10 outcomes of the Authority's **Partnership Management Plan**, which sets out priorities for the National Park until 2025.

# Take a walk in a habitat as rare as the rainforest!



**If you hear the words 'trail' and South Downs, your first thought is probably of the world-famous South Downs Way.**

But there's also a lesser known trail that reveals some of the most beautiful and rare heathland found in Europe – a colourful habitat teeming with reptiles, amphibians and rare birds.

Now the 65-mile long Serpent Trail – so-called because of its resemblance to a snake on a map – has been upgraded and given a new lease of life as part of the Heathlands Reunited project which is a partnership of 11 organisations all working together to restore our beautiful heathland.

As well as re-routing parts of the trail to move them on to more scenic paths, the trail is now colour coded by direction so that walkers can follow the route from the head or tail and start from any point.

To coincide with National Walking Month this May, a brand-new colourful downloadable guide has also been produced to help walkers navigate the trail.

The trail snakes its way from Haslemere in Surrey (the head and tongue) to Petersfield in Hampshire.

Depending on the time of the year, walkers may be lucky enough to spot some of the rare, and often secretive, wildlife on the route, including sand lizards, smooth snakes, the silver-studded blue butterfly or the Dartford Warbler.

The trail shows off the outstanding landscape of the greensand hills, its wildlife, and rich history, as well as more recent conservation efforts to protect the incredibly fragile lowland heath habitats.

The trail originally launched in 2005 and has been updated thanks to the Heathlands Reunited Project, which is funded by the National Lottery Heritage fund.



Olivia French, Activities and Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: "We're excited to be reviving this beautiful trail and highlighting the

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY threatened habitat which is actually as rare as the rainforest.

"The Serpent Trail is a fantastic opportunity to see some of the most magical and inspiring lowland heaths you'll see anywhere in Europe.



"It's obviously a very fragile habitat so we would always ask walkers to leave no trace, but we also want people to get out and enjoy this fantastic trail. By more people understanding and appreciating how amazing our heaths are, the more chance they have of surviving and flourishing.

"The trail connects two towns that are very accessible by train, so it's a great way to explore the South Downs National Park and leave the car at home."

The patchwork of lowland heath sites along the Serpent Trail are a stronghold for all six of the UK's native reptile species, including the elusive smooth snake and the striking sand lizard. In the spring, lizards can often be seen sunning themselves on south-facing spots at various heathland sites along the trail. Look out for the males that take on a bright green hue during mating season during late-April and May!

For more information on the Serpent Trail and to download a copy of the new trail guide visit [www.southdowns.gov.uk/get-active/on-foot/serpent-trail/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/get-active/on-foot/serpent-trail/)

Watch a video about the Serpent Trail [here](#)



## What is Heathlands Reunited?

Once a vast open, heathland now makes up only 1% of the National Park and is broken up into 'islands' where isolated plants and animals are far more vulnerable to local extinction. The partners working to help reconnect heaths and help them flourish are: National Trust, Ministry of Defence, Lynchmere Society, Forestry England, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Hampshire County Council, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, RSPB and the South Downs National Park Authority.

[Find out more here.](#)

## Enjoying mindful moments



**Encountering wildlife is a great chance for a mindful moment. Elinor Newman, Heathlands Reunited's Assistant Engagement Officer, shares her top 10 tips for being mindful on the Serpent Trail. Why not try**

**one or more that seem interesting and let us know how you get on?**

- 1) Sometimes, one of the most radical things we can do in our fast-paced world is to stop, pause, or deliberately go more slowly. When arriving at the Serpent Trail, try pausing for a moment before setting off, perhaps letting go of the journey, and focusing on being on the Trail.
- 2) Mindfulness is often considered an individual activity, but we need companionship too. Why not go out on the trail with a friend, two- or four-legged, and see what you discover together? If you go with your four-legged friend, don't forget to 'Take the Lead' on the Heath, so that you can both relax and enjoy your time.
- 3) Becoming aware of our breathing can sometimes help us out of our busy minds and back into our bodies. Try slowing and deepening your breath.
- 4) Another way of calming a busy mind is to focus on our senses. Try looking around, what can you see? What can you hear? What can you smell? How does the path feel under your feet? Perhaps focus on a tiny detail, such as a flower, a spider, the buzz of an insect, the feel of the bark of a tree...
- 5) Sometimes our electronic devices can be demanding and distracting. You might like to turn your phone off or put it into airplane mode. Or you might like to use it differently, perhaps to take a photo of a colour, shape, creature, or view that catches your eye.
- 6) Speaking of other creatures, why not pause for a moment and ask, what else is here? Try finding five other creatures – they could be plants or animals or fungi. You don't have to identify them, just notice that they are living there as well.
- 7) Parts of the Serpent Trail may be busy at certain times of day. You could try visiting at quieter moments, maybe earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon, perhaps timed to catch the sunrise or sunset.
- 8) How about returning regularly to the same section, so that it becomes a special place for you? You might notice how it changes at different times of day and through different seasons.
- 9) Look up! The heathland sites along the Serpent Trail have some wide-open spaces and big views, where you can really see the sky. What can you see? Clouds? Birds? The moon and stars?
- 10) Do something creative! Sketch something you can see, write a letter to the landscape, or make up a poem or story about a creature on the trail. If you pass a Bronze-age barrow or a Roman road, imagine what life might have been like in those times. Allow yourself to be curious and playful.

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY Experience the "talking" bench



Devil's Dyke

### **Who doesn't enjoy sitting on a bench and admiring the view, perhaps soothing your weary legs after a long walk?**

Now a new kind of bench is coming to the South Downs region – taking the sitting experience to a whole new level of intriguing!

Throughout May and June, a bright orange audio bench will be appearing in a range of locations between Brighton and Worthing Piers.

The bench will play recordings of local people, including a fisherman, a sea swimmer, a nurse, a busker, giving their views of what it's like to live in this part of the world.

Pier to Pier is a piece of public art and has been created and devised by Brighton's RAPT Theatre and will be running from 10 May to 6 June 2021.

The bench will be positioned in spots looking out to sea and will visit two South Downs National Park spots – Devil's Dyke from 13 to 15 May, and Mill Hill Nature Reserve from 28 to 30 May.

The public will be invited to sit on the bench at 10 locations across the 14 miles between the two piers.

Stories include Ron, a Goring fisherman, describing being at sea during an eclipse.

The audio reminiscences will also feature a soundtrack of a new arrangement created especially for the project by film composer Jocelyn Pook, who produced music for blockbuster movies *Eyes Wide Shut* and *Gangs of New York*. The arrangement will be sung by over 50 community choir singers from all along the Sussex coast who have been rehearsing online before being recorded for the final piece.

Emma Higham, of RAPT Theatre, explained: "This piece explores the notion of living on the edge and finding a point of balance in uncertain times. Our desire is to create something unique, accessible for all and uplifting as we come out of a challenging and difficult year."

Pier to Pier is funded by Arts Council England, Chalk Cliff Trust and Enjoolata Foundation.

More details and a map of the bench's location can be found at [www.pier-to-pier.com](http://www.pier-to-pier.com)

# Walking in the footsteps of artistic geniuses



Virginia Woolf – one of Britain's most celebrated modernist writers

**For National Walking Month, Emily Summers-Mileman, Place and Interpretation Officer for the National Park, introduces a new immersive walking experience that brings together art, culture, history and landscape in a unique way.**

With the arrival of spring, we're all keen to brush away the cobwebs of a long winter in lockdown and start getting out and about in nature once again.

We're thrilled to be launching a free walking tour app that will give you the chance to experience our beautiful National Park from a completely new perspective.

Writers, artists, poets and musicians have long drawn inspiration from the landscapes of the South Downs.

The South Downs National Park Authority has worked with three heritage venues in East Sussex to tell their stories and create an immersive experience.

A great opportunity to get back to some of the National Park's amazing cultural venues, explore the beautiful surrounding countryside and villages and learn about the artists who fell in love with the South Downs.

You can choose from three walking tours that are available to download on your phone. Simply search for "In The Footsteps" in your app store.

## Charleston

Your will begin at Charleston Farmhouse and journey through the countryside, finishing at Berwick Church.

This tour follows the lives of the artists who sought retreat here, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, and explores what life was like here during the Second World War.



Charleston Farmhouse

## Monk's House

Starting at Southease Railway Station, you will walk the same paths that Virginia Woolf once walked, passing through Rodmell and along the banks of the River Ouse. You will hear about the huge impact that the South Downs had on Virginia's life, including her love of walking and her decision to make Monk's House at Rodmell her "address for ever and ever".



The beautiful garden at Monk's House

## Ditchling

Ditchling was home to a community of artists and makers in the 20th century and many of their works are now held at the Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft. This tour will guide you through the local landscape, highlighting landmarks linked to the artists and makers that lived here.



**Please check each venue's website for details on re-opening to the public this month 😊**

## Castle gardens radiate colours of the spring



**Last month saw the start of the annual Tulip Festival at Arundel Castle as more than 120,000 tulips in 130 varieties burst into bloom – a truly incredible sight!**

Have you ever noticed that tulip flowers are symmetrical? It's thought their name comes from the Persian word for turban, which the flower heads are thought to resemble. Tulips, the bright, show-stopping flower in spring's colour palette, originally grew in areas stretching from Southern Europe to Central Asia. From the 17th century onwards, tulips were popular throughout western Europe. So popular in fact that tulip bulbs were traded like stocks and shares.

Purple tulips are particularly resplendent against their green stalk – and they still signify elegance and royalty. For centuries, purple dye, which could only be made from a crushed Mediterranean sea snail, was a luxury that only the seriously wealthy could afford. Purple became a signifier of status, so much so that in the 16th century, Queen Elizabeth I inscribed rules governing who was permitted to wear purple into English law.



**Arundel Castle's** head gardener Martin Duncan has these top tips for growing tulips:

- It's best to plant tulip bulbs in November so they do not rot in the ground.
- If you're growing tulips in pots, make sure you water them regularly, so they do not dry out.
- Tulips like half shade and half sunshine, so plant them in an area when they can ideally have both.
- Whether you plant your tulips in a pot or the ground, make sure you plant the bulbs 4" deep. This helps tulips grow back year after year.

## Have you tried microvolunteering yet?

**Daniel Greenwood, Volunteer Development Officer for the National Park, explains a new initiative aimed at encouraging people of all ages to microvolunteer and give nature a helping hand.**



We have over 300 registered volunteers who are active through our Volunteer Ranger Service programme across the South Downs and we also have a project for people aged 16 to 25 called South Downs Youth Action. As you can imagine, it has been very challenging to undertake volunteering projects in the pandemic but we're ready to kick on again in 2021.

Microvolunteering, however, is something that's pandemic-proof for many people. We're investing in this important area of volunteering to increase both impact and inclusion in the South Downs. Things like the Big Garden Bird Watch and Butterfly Count can be done from your window, garden or local green space. And we haven't even mentioned the wonders of iNaturalist!

We'll be issuing a seasonal email promoting microvolunteering opportunities through technology, training, events and much more. Please click [here to sign up](#).

In the meantime, I'll explain a bit more about the nature identification tools that are becoming really popular.

UK National Parks have launched **LookWild**, a project to capture species records with images using iNaturalist

You can take part in two ways:

1. **Download the iNaturalist app on your phone or tablet** and submit species records directly from your device
2. **Submit photos via the iNaturalist website**

If your record is located in a UK National Park, the record will be logged within the project. It's easy!

iNaturalist uses artificial intelligence to offer species suggestions, combined with a group of real humans who form the iNaturalist community to offer an identification.

If you're beginning on your journey of species



An Emperor Dragonfly

identification you can also download the **Seek app**, which uses your phone camera to scan species and make a suggestion of what it is. iNaturalist is a great way to improve your knowledge and get help from other people at the click of a button.

This is a really exciting time for casual species monitoring and we hope you'll take part!

# Things to do in the South Downs this May

Please follow the links as booking may be necessary. Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [southdowns.gov.uk/events/](https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



- Have you tried Langham Brewery's new **Taproom**? The microbrewery now has an outside area open six days a week, with eight tables available on a first-booked first-served basis.
- Visit **Chawton House** in Hampshire from 17 May for two fascinating exhibitions. *Made in Lockdown* features interesting items made by volunteers during lockdown, while *Man Up!* highlights stories of women who stepped into male roles who, by picking up a pen, pistol or sword, broke with convention to survive and thrive.
- Take part in one of the many free activities for the **Spring Water Festival** in the Eastbourne area, including self-guided walks, beach cleans and even seaweed identification!
- Enjoy the **May Festival** at Goodwood on 21 and 22 May. A celebration of sport and South Downs produce!
- Visit a new family attraction at **Sky Park Farm**, a working deer farm in West Sussex, from 21 May.
- Discover what life would have been like in Roman Britain as a Roman Legion descends on **Butser Ancient Farm** in Hampshire on 30 and 31 May.

## YOU SAY:

Do you have a story you want to tell about the National Park? A burning issue that you think needs to be addressed? Please let us know!



To submit a comment for our newsletter please email [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk). For a fast and direct response to your questions please email [info@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:info@southdowns.gov.uk)

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