

SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

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NATIONAL PARK

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This month:

- **Biodiversity bouncing back** Water voles were thought to be locally extinct in Hampshire 20 years ago. Not any longer – find out about our pioneering work to help them and other animals.
- **Embrace the darkness!** As the nights draw in, we're launching our Dark Skies season.
- **Spooky South Downs** Did witches exist in the South Downs? We reveal the wicked truth!
- **Competition!** Win a family ticket to see some of the world's most endangered species at Marwell.

As always, please send your comments and ideas to us at newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

Ratty's remarkable return to the South Downs!

Once a common sight on Britain's riverbanks, the much-adored "Ratty" has become a rarity on many of the UK's waterways.

But now the animal made famous by *The Wind in the Willows* is making a remarkable comeback in the South Downs National Park, with a detailed ecological report showing that water voles are indeed thriving, and busily breeding, on the River Meon in Hampshire.

The scientific survey comes just over a decade after a local reintroduction programme of the water vole, which remains the country's fastest declining mammal species, losing 95 per cent of its range over the past 100 years. The biggest reasons for the decline have been habitat loss and predation by the non-native American mink.

The South Downs monitoring revealed that the reintroduction has been a true success, with ecologists and volunteers finding over 2,500 signs of water vole activity at 27 sites along the river and its tributaries. Twenty of the recorded sites showed evidence of breeding. Since 2013, just over 2,800 water voles were released along the river and the survey indicates thousands have made the River Meon their permanent home.

Water voles are important to a river habitat as they provide a good meal for predators like otters, herons and marsh harrier. They are also known as "engineers" for



thriving wetland ecosystems as their continual nipping and grazing of riverbanks helps to create flower-rich habitat for insect species such as bumblebees, moths and butterflies, which then become food for insect-eating birds and bats. Water voles' complex underground structures are also used as refuges by a range of other small mammal species, reptiles, amphibians and insects.

Thanks to the water vole re-introduction, the otter has returned to the River Meon, with evidence there may be three breeding females on the river.

Dr Rowenna Baker, who conducted the survey with an army of National Park volunteers, also found evidence of a wealth of other wildlife along the river, including hazel dormice, hedgehog, harvest mice, brown hare, badger, grass snake, common lizard, Cetti's warbler, kingfisher, lapwing, marsh harrier and brown trout. There was also the potential presence of a key species, *Hildenbrandia*

New climate knowledge hub



Local groups in and around the National Park are being encouraged to share climate action tips as a new “knowledge hub” is launched.

One of the National Park’s priorities is climate action, delivered through nature-based projects, such as creating more wildlife havens, and also by supporting community projects that encourage sustainability. Examples include setting up repair cafes, training community energy champions to help save energy in the home, nest boxes for swifts and owls, and community food growing projects.

To help bring people together, the National Park has launched the South Downs Climate Action Network on Knowledge Hub, where community groups will be able to share information on their projects and provide insights, learning and expertise. The hub will be a useful resource for residents who want to establish new groups or projects in their own communities.

Warmly welcoming the initiative is co-chair of Greening Arundel, Katrina Murray. Greening Arundel was only formed last year but has already had some big successes, including transforming a 120-metre pathway from the train station with hedgerows and wildflowers.

Katrina said: “My husband and I felt despondent and kept bumping into others who felt the same way. The penny dropped and we started working together and supporting each other. The momentum has been building as people saw the results and we began believing that we can make a positive difference.”

The Climate Action Knowledge Hub can be accessed via <https://khub.net/> and is a free to use service for the public and not-for-profit sectors.

Sara Osman, the National Park’s Climate Officer, said: “There’s so much fantastic community work going on across the region and this new hub will bring together all that locally based knowledge and learning into one place. We hope it will inspire more people and communities to get involved in tackling the climate and nature crisis.”



Learn more about the National Park’s climate work [here](#).

rivularis, a red algae that is typically found in healthy chalk river systems.

Dr Baker said: “It’s been fantastic to find evidence that water voles are persisting at their release sites and colonising new habitat up and down the river corridor. The abundance of field signs show that water voles are now thriving on the River Meon and this is incredibly important when nationally their future still remains uncertain. It’s a real testament to the National Park and those who live and work along the river and their commitment to making it a haven for this charismatic species.”



The turnaround for the river has been made possible by the Meon Valley Partnership, which was formed in 2008 to help introduce projects to restore the waterway to good health as a functioning river and ecosystem. Decades of habitat loss, pollution and invasive species had taken their toll on the river and reduced its biodiversity. The partnership has worked with landowners to restore natural features of the river, re-introduce water voles, control American mink populations, and improve water quality.



Elaina Whittaker-Slark, Lead Ranger for the Hampshire area of the National Park, said: “Unfortunately re-introductions are not always successful, so it’s wonderful to see this latest survey that shows good old

‘Ratty’ really is flourishing! It’s a good indicator of the overall health of this very rare chalk river, which has really turned a corner in the past decade or so after water voles were considered locally extinct back in 2003.

“One of the most memorable moments of the project was when we found out that marsh harriers were again breeding at Titchfield Haven. This meant that there were enough prey species like water voles for them to be able to raise a family. The food web of the river was at last complete again.”

Tim Slaney, Chief Executive (Interim) for the National Park Authority, said: “We all know nature is in crisis in the UK, so it’s wonderful to be able to share this positive story of wildlife bouncing back with a little helping hand from us.

“As part of our ambitious ReNature initiative, we’re determined to turn the tide on biodiversity loss and water will continue to be a priority in our nature recovery goals. Working with partners over the coming years and decades, we would hope that the nature recovery on the River Meon can be improved further and replicated on the many other important rivers and streams in the South Downs National Park.”

To find out more about the ReNature initiative visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature/

Embrace the darkness! Dark Skies season has lift-off!



The 'glimmers' of the starry night sky that make us feel happy will be one of the highlights as the National Park launches its exciting Dark Skies season.

As the nights draw in and nocturnal wildlife emerges earlier in the evening, the National Park is encouraging people to embrace the darkness and discover the incredible International Dark Sky Reserve on their doorstep.

This year's theme is "glimmers" – those micro-moments of joy that make us feel happy and inspired – which many people often experience when immersed under a blanket of stars, walking under the glow of the moon or admiring nature.

The ever-popular astrophotography competition returns, with the National Park offering prizes of £100 for breathtaking images of the night sky.

The Dark Skies season will begin with a guided night walk and star party at Alice Holt Forest on 30 October (booking required on [Eventbrite](#)).

A series of fascinating **podcasts** are also being produced with a focus on how being in touch with the dark skies can boost health and wellbeing, discussing people's connections to the dark skies and how to get the most out of a night-time visit to the National Park.

Weather permitting, more events may take place over the autumn and winter, do keep a look out!

The bioluminescence of glowworms and biofluorescence of other life will also be celebrated as part of the season, which will culminate in the ever-popular Dark Skies Festival, taking place from 13 to 23 February next year. There will be a bumper line-up of events and activities for all the family to enjoy.

"Dark Skies" Dan Oakley, our dark skies expert, said: "We're hugely excited to be launching our Dark Skies season and it couldn't come at a better time with Astronomy Day taking place this October.

"The dark skies of the South Downs really are very special, particularly having this International Reserve in the middle of the busy south east.

"The darkness itself is an incredibly important habitat for wildlife within the National Park and it's important we help mitigate the effects of light pollution that can damage this by disrupting the natural rhythms of animals and plants."



Elinor Newman, "Queen of the Night" and organising the festival, said: "While there's lots of darkness, there are also glimmers of sparkling light, whether that be the twinkle of stars or the glow of the moon. As part of this year's Dark Skies season, we want to celebrate those glimmers that are small, positive moments in our lives that can encourage feelings of happiness and awe.

"Standing beneath a night sky in the National Park that is packed with stars and constellations – so many visible to the naked eye – is a moment that brings joy and wonder to people of all ages and we're looking forward to more people being able to enjoy this incredible experience this Dark Skies season."

The full programme for the Festival will be unveiled in January.

People will be able to enter the astrophotography competition from 4 November.

This year photographers have the chance of winning up to £100 for a breathtaking image in one of the following three categories:

South Downs Dark Skyscapes – Can you capture a dramatic star-studded photograph of the landscape showing the cosmos above it? Pictures could include the aurora borealis.

South Downs Life at Night – Can you capture an amazing shot of life at night in the National Park? This could include wildlife, heritage, towns, villages, people stargazing, trees, plants or fungi!

Magnificent Moon – Can you capture an amazing image of the moon above the South Downs landscape? Images of the moon should be alongside the landscape, buildings, towns, villages, cultural heritage or people in the South Downs.

Mobile phone category – This category is wide open and we just want your best shot of the Dark Skies on your mobile! It could be a snap of the moon or a picture of your family on a night-time walk. Let your creative spirit free!

The runner-up prize in each category will be £50 and all submitted images must be taken within the South Downs National Park.

The deadline for entries to the competition is midnight on Wednesday, 15 January 2025.

For all details about the Dark Skies Season and to enter the astrophotography competition head [here](#).

Exceptional design shines brightly at award ceremony



A stunning new wildlife haven, a hillside café in the shape of a train carriage, an eco-friendly house and a beautifully renovated farmstead are among the winners of the South Downs Design Awards.

The winners were announced at an inspiring ceremony at the South Downs Centre in Midhurst on 2 October.

The awards celebrate high standards of architectural and landscape design, as well as promote creativity and understanding of the National Park through design. More than 60 nominations were received earlier this year and 16 unique projects were shortlisted from across Sussex and Hampshire.

It was double delight for the team behind the restoration of the **Cockshut Stream**, in Lewes, (*pictured above receiving their awards*) which won the **Landscape Category** and also took the top spot in **The People's Choice**, taking the lion's share of the 1,500 votes in the public poll.

Six hectares of much-needed wetland for wildlife has been created following the realignment of the rare chalk stream. The area has quickly become an oasis for nature, with herons, kingfishers, egret and snipe among the many birds to be found, while toads, sticklebacks, eels and newts can be spotted in the ponds.

The partners on the project included the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust, Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust, Lewes District Council, Veolia Environmental Trust and Chris Butler Archaeological Services.

The judges said: "This is truly an enhancement of both natural beauty and wildlife. The panel hopes this kind of project can be replicated at a larger scale both within the National Park and far beyond."

Taking the trophy in the **Non-residential Category** was the **Handlebar Café**, which sits on the viaduct cycle and walking path below St Catherine's Hill in Winchester

Judges said: "The judges were very taken with the genesis of this project which originated from ideas and sketches by local teenagers with no formal design training."

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There were joint winners in the **Residential Category: Lannings Way, Midhurst and The Mile House, at Crossgates, Amberley**. Lannings



Ways comprises four energy-efficient homes that pay homage to the heritage of the site as a former ambulance station and the traditional setting of the site in the conservation area. The Mile House is an incredible living space, placed up to the edge of a slope to maximise views of the National Park.

Winning the **Conservation Category** was **Wiston Estate Winery at Washington** with a redeveloped historic farmstead that draws inspiration from the surrounding landscape. Two historic flint barns have been sensitively restored into a fine dining restaurant and private dining room, alongside new-build elements for wine production and a visitor shop.

Judges said: "We were very impressed with the repurposing of historic farm buildings and the sensitive juxtaposition of new buildings and the very high quality of detailing and workmanship."

All the winners received a specially designed trophy, beautifully hand-carved in South Downs oak by acclaimed West Sussex-based sculptor, Alison Crowther. Helping to present the awards and special guest for the day was Carolin Göhler, President of The Landscape Institute.

The judges highly commended a number of projects:

Black Timber House, Rodmell – a house with very good sustainable credentials.

New Temple, Liss – a unique project using a bright material palette which creates 'an aura of calm'.

Woolbeding Glasshouse – a stunning kinetic glasshouse, 15 metres high, at Woolbeding National Trust Gardens made up of 10 segments (sepals) designed to open and close in the manner of a flower.

Chalk-based Renovation, Remediation and Regeneration at Shoreham Cement Works – an innovative hypothetical student-based project looking at possible ways to redevelop the Shoreham site, including a construction school and production facility for chalk cobs as a natural building material.

Tim Slaney, Chief Executive (Interim) of the Authority, said: "The standard of entries has been exceptional, and it's been an incredibly difficult decision to pick the winners among such a strong field. Every project demonstrates just how high, rightly, the benchmark is for design in the South Downs National Park. They show the true skill and flair of architects, urban designers, landscape specialists, developers and planners to be able to respond to landscape, character, local identity and heritage, as well as find innovative solutions to the climate and nature emergencies."



Witches of the South Downs

Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead, takes a deep dive into the history of witches in the Downs.



When we think of Halloween, alongside ghouls, ghosts and zombies, the figure of the witch comes to mind. All reflect ancient links to a time of heightened superstition, a need to remember the dead, and the turning of the seasons. The witch is tied to English history most notably in the 16th and 17th centuries, when social, political and religious instability saw a rise in

accusations, punishment and executions.

In the late 16th and 17th centuries, the rise of the popular press and a unique set of circumstances increased unrest and uncertainty across English society. Unlike the East of England, counties such as Sussex and Hampshire were not particularly noted for high numbers of legal cases involving accusations of witchcraft in this period.

However, records for the Assizes – a form of travelling court for the trial of serious offence - and the Bishop's Courts, do preserve the names of those accused of witchcraft who came from rural communities in what is today the South Downs National Park. Some fared better than others.

An Agnes Mowser from Fletching, accused in 1591 of bewitching Anne, the daughter of a Henry Clemens, was sentenced to imprisonment. Mother Mary Scutt of Bury was accused of witchcraft in 1603 for her work as a local herbalist. Jane Westwood, of Arundel, was accused in 1612 while working as a midwife and minister to the sick, but her case was thankfully dismissed.

Around 75 to 85 per cent of those accused were women, but in some cases, men were accused and tried, such as in 1607 when Thomas Herold of Pulborough was accused of being "a witch" by his neighbour Elizabeth Hitchcock, who went on to level the accusation that he "did bewitch her husband's cattle that they could not prosper for him".

Most of those accused in Sussex appear to have been acquitted or given sentences of imprisonment, but some women and men accused of witchcraft were not so lucky. Some were sentenced to be hanged – such as Margaret Cooper in 1575, after being accused of bewitching a man and woman to death – or drowned. Pardons were few, but one example includes a Jane Mortymer from Hampshire, who in 1583 was accused of casting spells to bring about the death of an Elizabeth Randal.

As well as the names of real people accused of witchcraft, we also have many stories associated with witches, including that of an unnamed witch who lived on Ditchling

Common and turned into a hare at night. This is a common theme in local folklore. There's the story of a witch at Plumpton who had the power to stop carts passing her cottage, no matter how hard the horses would pull. Names like Nanny Smart, Butter Ede and Old Martha, paint a picture of older women, often living alone, accused of terrorising communities.

Why did so many accusations of witchcraft occur in this period of English history? It's possible that they link to a simmering period of social uncertainty, fed by disease, plague, crop failure, religious change, the rise of the popular press, and eventually, civil war and the execution of a king, resulting in a situation where people's fears and anger caused intense fractures within communities that could be easily capitalised on.



The law also reveals a growing fear of witchcraft. Although Pope Innocent VIII had declared witchcraft a heresy in 1484, in England it was the Witchcraft Act of 1541 issued by Henry VIII, which made witchcraft punishable by death and the seizure of property. It was repealed in 1547 by Henry's son, Edward VI, but a new Act was introduced under Elizabeth I in 1562, which also transferred trials from the jurisdiction of the church to that of the state. She was eventually succeeded in 1603 by James I of England (and VI of Scotland) who had himself written a treatise on witchcraft in 1597 called the *Daemonologie*, after becoming convinced that stormy sea voyages in 1589 and 1590, which had delayed both his marriage to Anne of Denmark and his return to Scotland, was down to the malign influence of witches.

Fear of witchcraft was evidently rife, with archaeological discoveries giving us witch bottles, often buried under or in front of the hearth in a home or under the floor of doorways. These stoneware jugs, known as Bellermines or Bartmann, or glass bottles, were filled with a variety of ingredients, which could include vinegar, bent pins or nails, hair, urine, wine, rosemary, shells, coins, earth, ash and then buried, acting as protection against the attention of witches and malevolent forces.

As children dress up in pointy hats and paint their faces green to trick-or-treat, behind the costume are those independent women who knew the every-day magic of treating wounds, delivering babies, or simply surviving as women on their own – the likes of Agnes Mowser, Mary Scutt, Jane Westwood and others. We should perhaps spend a minute remembering that at this time in history, ordinary men and women – neighbours, friends and family across all communities – were fractured by ignorance and fear. It's also worth recalling a memorial to the 72 men and women accused of witchcraft on the Orkney Islands, which bares the inscription "*They wur cheust folk*" (they were just folk).

'This is long but satisfying work'

Our not so spooky species!

As the crisp autumn air settles in and the evenings grow longer, thoughts often turn to all things spooky and mysterious.

But here in the South Downs National Park, not all creatures of the night – or day – are as eerie as they may seem. Let's take a light-hearted look at some of the incredible plants and animals that call the South Downs their home.

Pipistrelle Bat

Bats are often cast as the quintessential Halloween creature, associated with haunted houses and dark nights. But here in the South Downs, bats are vital to maintaining healthy ecosystems,

Species like the pipistrelle bat, one of the smallest in the UK, can be seen darting through the twilight sky, feasting on insects like moths and midges.

Cross Spider

Though their webs may be reminiscent of haunted house décor, the cross spider aka Garden Spider is a gentle creature that wants nothing more than to go about their daily business of catching bugs. Although spiders can make people shudder, they are a crucial part of our ecosystem, keeping other insects in check.

**Fly Agaric**

While fungi have long been associated with the mysterious and magical (think fairy rings and toadstools in enchanted forests), many species found in the South Downs are fascinating rather than frightful.

October is prime time for spotting a variety of mushrooms in the National Park, such as the strikingly beautiful fly agaric with its red cap and white spots. Though it may look like something from a witch's potion, this fungus is best admired from a distance due to its toxicity. They are a reminder of nature's incredible diversity.

Natterjack Toad

Among the more elusive creatures of the South Downs, the natterjack toad might initially seem like the kind of critter to avoid on a dark, misty evening.

But these toads are far from spooky – though their loud, distinctive croak might send a shiver down your spine if you're not expecting it! Happy Halloween!



Ethan, right, with Ranger Sophie Brown on the South Downs Way

Ethan Purdy, Assistant Ranger, discusses the recent work of volunteers to help maintain the South Downs Way.

Snaking its way along the very spine of the chalk, the South Downs Way is a 100-mile-long exhibition to one of the best natural galleries in the UK. Artwork by nature and toil adorn its path in vistas stretching into the sea. It's a wonderful testament to the beauty of our landscape, and one which we're lucky enough to call ours.

With this ownership, comes responsibility, however. Left with no management – time and flora would reclaim the path and make it untraversable. So, with the steady hands of our volunteers, and trusted tools, we keep this trail open, for many more to discover its wonder.

Last month we completed a section of this work near Cocking, West Sussex. The volunteers – armed with grass hooks – cut swathes into the bank vegetation, raking the material up and collecting it to be unloaded in a prepared deposit site. This is long but satisfying work. The volunteers were also in charge of sharpening their own equipment as the day went on and found great satisfaction in keeping their tools in fine fettle – if for no other reason, because it makes them far more effective!

The collection of this material is for ecological benefit too. The verges can be a haven for many species, including many butterflies, and by collecting the cuttings volunteers allow this site to attempt to return to the chalk grassland we so desperately need in the National Park. Cumulatively over the past two centuries we have lost more than 80% of the chalk grassland in the UK. So, the ribbons that adorn the edges of the South Downs Way may well make all the difference.

When the engines of the brushcutters aren't running, work up on the hill is a peaceful endeavour. A view to the horizon, filled with a patchwork of farms, soft green envelopes of woodland and in the distance, the caliginosity of the sea.

Moments like those make for opportunities to remember that within those confines, we get to make a difference.

Hurrah for hedges!



Almost 15 miles of hedgerow have been restored over the past three years in the western section of the National Park following a big community effort.

"Hampshire Hedgerows" has drawn together landowners, farmers, young people and volunteers to help create and restore hedgerows that provide an essential refuge for wildlife.

Supporting some 130 different flora and fauna, hedges and their flowers, berries and nuts are a vital food source for invertebrates, birds and mammals, including some very rare ones such as the hazel dormouse, while bats use them as "commuter routes" for foraging and roosting.

Small but mighty, they also clean our air, capture carbon, reduce flooding and give clues to historic land management.

The project was a partnership between the National Park, Selborne Landscape Partnership and Winchester Downs Farm Cluster, and supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Dozens of students from Collyer's College, Horsham and Chichester College attended hedgelaying training days.

In total, 187 people of all ages received training.



Laura Sercombe, Director of Landscape and Strategy for the National Park, said: "Hedgerows are such an important part of our landscape heritage and it's wonderful to see them being restored."

"With farmland covering some 70 per cent of the National Park, hedges are absolutely vital to supporting farmland wildlife and also play a key role in soil health."

"It's fantastic that young people are being trained in the rural skill of hedgelaying, encouraging future generations to keep this tradition alive."

Meanwhile, the Hampshire Hedge project, led by CPRE Hampshire, continues in earnest, with the aim of connecting the New Forest and South Downs National Parks with 14 miles of new hedgerow.

Biosphere looks to expand



The only urban biosphere in the UK, The Living Coast, is planning to increase in size to include half a million residents.

The Living Coast has been a designated UNESCO Biosphere since 2014, stretching from Shoreham to Newhaven, from the South Downs to the sea. The biospheres are places of international best practice, promoting sustainable development in nature conservation, cultural diversity, and economic development.

Now, as part of a bid to renew the area's status for the next 10 years, the partnership is looking to expand the biosphere from over 330,000 residents to nearly 550,000, embracing all of Adur & Worthing, Lewes District Council, and Brighton & Hove, bringing in Seaford in the east and Goring in the west.

It will take in landmarks in the National Park such as Cissbury Ring, the largest hill fort in Sussex, and Charleston, former home of the Bloomsbury artists' group.

Priorities for the future include promoting sustainability education and using the designation to promote a sense of local pride.

Martin Harris, chair of The Living Coast partnership, which is led by Brighton & Hove City Council, said: "We have created an inspiring and shared vision that will connect and balance the needs of humanity and nature over the next 10 years and beyond."

The Living Coast is involving more young people, recently recruiting two youth volunteers to ensure diverse youth voices are represented in the biosphere.

Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the National Park Authority, said: "As a UK National Park, we share a core mission with UNESCO Biospheres: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of our area."



"We want UNESCO to continue to internationally recognise the collective efforts and ambitions of the Biosphere Partnership, where biodiversity conservation and sustainable development are compatible and mutually dependent goals."

Stunning South Downs calendar is now available!



Celebrating the breathtaking landscapes, nature and wildlife of the South Downs, our brand-new calendar is on sale now.

The calendar features iconic views of the National Park taken from our annual photo competition.

Copies can be bought by visiting the South Downs Centre, in Midhurst, or Seven Sisters Visitor Centre, at Exceat, near Seaford.

Costing just £9.99, the calendar is also available to buy online or by telephoning 01730 814810.

Zara Kelleway, who manages the visitor area and shop at the South Downs Centre, said: "Our latest calendar is beautiful and would make such a lovely gift for Christmas.

"It takes you on a seasonal journey through the South Downs and is guaranteed to brighten your day!"

We're also giving away the calendar as a prize to two lucky winners.

All new subscribers to the newsletter during October will be automatically entered into the draw and winners chosen at random.

Sign up to the newsletter here:

www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/

Order online here: www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-calendar/

Don't forget there's still time to enter this year's photo competition, with several prizes of up to £100.

This year we're celebrating the seasons, as well as the amazing wildlife of the National Park and its many interesting towns, villages and hamlets.

The deadline for submissions is **midnight on 31 October**.

The vivid colours of autumn and its crimson sunsets are a great time to capture views of the National Park so do get out and get snapping! Enter the competition here:

www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photo-comp/

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Win a family day-out to meet Marwell's new arrivals!



Marwell Wildlife, near Winchester, is celebrating a clutch of new arrivals, including an incredibly rare mountain bongo calf.

Born last month, the male baby bongo has already impressed zookeepers with his feistiness.

There are thought to be only 100 mountain bongos left in the wild so the new addition to Marwell's herd is a real cause for celebration. The species is listed on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List as Critically Endangered and the new arrival is part of the international breeding programme to ensure the future of the species, which continues to decline in the wild.

Rhiannon Wolff, animal keeper, said: "The calf has been very confident, energetic and adventurous right from the start."

Meanwhile, Ruby, one of the female giraffes, recently gave birth to an adorable male Rothschild's giraffe calf. The species is listed as Near Threatened on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List.



The gorgeous bundle of joy, who already stands at over 5ft tall, is the first newborn addition to Marwell Zoo's **giraffe** herd since 2012. Elyse Summerfield-Smith, Zoo Veterinarian, said: "Christa, our other female giraffe, was a great support to Ruby during labour and has been enjoying her role as 'Auntie Christa' ever since!"

We've teamed up with Marwell to offer a single-entry family ticket for two adults and two children (worth over £90 at peak season) that can be used until next summer.

People signing up to the newsletter during October will be automatically entered into the draw.

Those who are already signed up can email "mountain bongo" to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 31 October.

Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).

Things to do in the South Downs this October

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/



- Head to **Seven Sisters Visitor Centre**, near Seaford, this Halloween half term (26 October to 3 November) for some spooky fun! Dive into a ghoulishly good time where kids of all ages can unleash their inner artist to craft a spine-chilling Halloween mask to take home with them!
- Witchy cackles, slithery scales and howling shrieks! Can you find the creatures at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Horndean, this Halloween? The **outdoor family trail adventure** can be booked online.
- Head to **Lewes Castle** during the half term week for a firework fairy and tinkering troll trail! Search for all eight hidden fairy and troll houses, and enjoy a sweet treat as a reward for completing the trail. There will also be sessions to make your own Bonfire Night Arts and Crafts on 1 and 2 November.
- **Skeleton Secrets** will be the focus of the half term week at Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire. Embark on a journey through time as you explore its ancient buildings and search for hidden skeleton bones scattered across the farm!
- **The Weald and Downland Living Museum**, near Chichester, will be hosting a range of fun activities over the half term week, including joining a medieval apothecary to make your own potion using dragon's blood and other gruesome ingredients to protect you from the plague and other terrifying diseases.
- The **"South Downs Open" exhibition** begins on 22 October at Petersfield Museum and will run until the end of January. It will include nearly 150 artworks on display by over 100 artists, including paintings, drawings, artist's prints, photography, sculpture textiles and ceramics.
- There will be a pop-up event at an eco-home in South Street, Lewes, on 17 October for people to find out more about eco-friendly living. Learn more [here](#).



Pic credits

P1 Dick Hawkes; P2 right Tina Knowles; P3 left Pablo Rodriguez; P3 right Michael Harris; P4 left Sam Moore;