

# SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

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SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK

## WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Stand up for nature** We lay out our response to a new biodiversity report that shows how much wildlife needs our help, and showcase what we can all do to help nature bounce back.
- **Delicious autumn!** It's one of the most wonderful times of the year to experience the South Downs. Find out ideas for autumn adventures in your National Park!
- **Celebrating Black History Month** Read more about one man's passion for the South Downs.
- **Competition!** Win an annual pass to a historic house with connections to Jane Austen.

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

## Call to action to help nature bounce back

**"We need more nature everywhere, for everyone."**

That's the call to action from the South Downs National Park Authority as it responds to the latest State of Nature report, which lays bare the full extent of the biodiversity crisis.

The leading scientific report, based on analysis from 60 organisations, shows that 1 in 6 species are at risk of being lost in Great Britain. The figure from a decade ago was 1 in 10.

Responding to the research, Andrew Lee, Director of Countryside Policy and Management at the South Downs National Park, said: "We welcome the publication of the report, which reveals just how much nature needs us at this critical time.

"It's a watershed moment for wildlife that should make us all take stock and, if we're to turn a corner as a nation, the decisions made over the next few years are going to be so important.

"There's bad and good news to take away. The bad news is that our key species are still declining and by an average of 19% since 1970.

"There are fewer of them and they are found in fewer places.



A short-eared owl at Seven Sisters Country Park

"This tells us that nature as a whole is really struggling.

"The good news is that we know what we need to do and how to do it. The report found that nature recovery action makes a difference. We just need to work harder, faster and, most importantly, work together.

"This is why the National Park Authority launched our 10-year ReNature campaign in 2021 with an ambitious target that 33% of the National Park is managed for nature by 2030.

## Funding helps schoolchildren



**More than 12,000 schoolchildren have been able to connect with nature and the great outdoors thanks to a National Park grant scheme.**

Pupils from across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex have been able to enjoy fun, nature-based trips after their schools were awarded an Outdoor Learning Grant.

A total of £109,000 of grant funding has been shared between 214 schools over the past 2 years – one of the highest amounts ever given out since the South Downs National Park was created. This is a five-fold increase from a decade ago.

Children have enjoyed all kinds of activities including hiking at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, a visit to a working farm, hands-on conservation tasks, a visit to Drusilla's Park, searching for "mini-beasts" at Woods Mill, and stepping back in time at Butser Ancient Farm.

The grant subsidises the cost of a trip and is open to state-funded schools and colleges with 10 per cent or more pupils eligible for Free School Meals. The trips are delivered by the South Downs Learning Network, which cover 100 sites and providers, delivering real-world learning to support the curriculum, as well as health and wellbeing benefits.

The grants are administered and funded by the South Downs National Park Authority, with additional funding from the South Downs National Park Trust, the official charity for the National Park.

Annie Williams, Deputy Headteacher from Glenwood School in Emsworth, Hampshire, said: "We would not have been able to afford to go without the grant and pupils would not have been able to have this wonderful experience."

Tara Fay, Year 5/6 Teacher and Geography Lead from Coombe Road Primary School in Brighton, said: "It is thanks to this funding that our children will always remember the school trip where they used state-of-the-art microscopes to dissect plants."

Almost 25,000 children and young people have so far benefitted from the school trips over the past decade.

It's hoped applications for the next round of grants will open in January, subject to further funding.

"The aim is that the other 67% is also good for nature, giving nature every opportunity to thrive and for everyone to be able to have access to it.

"No-one is pretending this is going to be easy – there's so much work that needs to be done.

"It's going to require a huge collective effort, partnership working on a scale we've never seen before, and most crucially, the right resourcing in order to get nature back on track."

The National Park's ReNature initiative is looking to create 13,000 hectares – an area three times the size of Portsmouth – of new habitat, including new woodlands, wetlands and wildflower meadows.



Andrew added: "Our nature recovery programme to date has largely been focused on habitats, but by getting the habitats 'bigger, better, and more joined up' that will support our species, such as hazel dormouse, otter and water vole (pictured below).

"Work is now under way to develop a species component to our programme, focusing on restoring habitat for some of our most important and endangered animals and plants. It's important to say that nature recovery action does not just sit with organisations such as National Parks and Wildlife Trusts.

"The beauty of it is that we can all make a difference. Whether it's by planting more wildflowers in your garden, a business pledging to help nature, or volunteering in your local community, every little action could make a big impact in the long-run."

To find out more about the ReNature campaign visit [www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/renature/)

Make a pledge to help nature and climate here: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/pledge/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/pledge/)

**What is the South Downs National Park doing to help tackle biodiversity loss? Find out more here:**

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-national-park-responds-to-state-of-nature-report-with-a-strong-call-to-action/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-national-park-responds-to-state-of-nature-report-with-a-strong-call-to-action/)



## Accessible autumn! Experience the wonders of “fall of the leaf”



*“Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the Earth seeking the successive autumns.”*

The famous writer George Eliot knew there was something very special about autumn and many would agree it’s one of the best times of the year to see the South Downs National Park.

It’s a season of morning mists and sensational sunsets, where a stroll with crunchy leaves underfoot followed by a hot chocolate can bring a warming sense of comfort and reflection that only the “fall” season can inspire.

With a quarter of the National Park covered in woodland – a bigger area than any other National Park in England – there’s plenty of leaves to change colour and eventually fall. Did you know that the phrase “fall of the leaf” was very common up until the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the French “automne” only became common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century?

Those looking to explore the wonders of autumn will find one of the most accessible protected landscapes in the UK. With over 3,300km of Rights of Way (2,050 miles...around the same distance from here to Cyprus!), the famous 100-mile long South Downs Way, and a large network of railway and bus connections across market towns and chocolate-box villages, you can experience tranquil nature while only being a stone’s throw from a pub or shop.

Andy Gattiker, who leads access in the National Park, said: “Autumn is such a wonderful time to explore the South Downs, especially the later sunrises and earlier sunsets which mean the ‘golden hour’ for photography often occurs when you’re out and about on a walk.

“The tree cover in the National Park is about the same size as the Isle of Wight, so you’re never far away from a lovely woodland walk to see all the vibrant shades of yellow, red and orange in the treescape.

“Not everyone loves mud and negotiating stiles, so autumn is a good time to try out one of our Miles Without Stiles routes. There’s seven across the National Park and

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they are gentle walks on solid ground that the whole family can enjoy, regardless of their fitness or mobility levels. We also have off-road mobility scooters for hire at Queen Elizabeth Country Park and Seven Sisters Country Park.

“We hope people enjoy experiencing the autumnal magic of this treasured landscape!”

Here are some of Andy’s ideas for a great day-out this autumn in the South Downs National Park:

### Try a Miles Without Stiles walk

Miles Without Stiles are routes that are suitable for people with limited mobility. Wheelchair users, families with pushchairs, dog walkers and less agile walkers can choose from a list of routes from across the South Downs.

Whether it’s a cosy coastal view you’re after, or an enchanting forest, there’s something for everyone:

- [Bramber Routes](#)
- [Ditchling Beacon and the Chattri](#)
- [Iping and Stedham Commons](#)
- [Seaford Head routes](#)
- [Seven Sisters routes](#)
- [Mill Hill route](#)
- [West Walk, Forest of Bere](#)

### Search for some spooky surprises

With humans inhabiting the South Downs for five millennia, it’s no wonder this rolling landscape is a swirling cauldron of myths, legends, folklore and ghost stories.



There are a few spots that are particularly spooky. Chanctonbury Ring, Devil’s Dyke, Racton Ruins, the Devil’s Humps of Kingley Vale – all are wrapped up in stories

of mystery and intrigue. Add a morning mist, or an evening fog, and you have the perfect recipe for spookiness!

There’s an action-packed line-up of Halloween-inspired events throughout October at various venues across the National Park, including “Fearsome Folktales” at [Butser Ancient Farm](#) and an arts session at the [Weald and Downland Living Museum](#) exploring the ancient legend of Knucker, the Sussex Water Dragon. A “Science Spooktacular”, with a monster mini disco and trick or treat trail, will be running at [Winchester Science Centre](#) from 7 to 30 October. At Seven Sisters Country Park there will be the Errie the Owl’s Creepy Trail from 21 to 29 October.

Throughout October, the National Park will also be running a **“Spooky South Downs” photo competition** on Instagram. Whether it be a gnarly tree, a spider’s web, a

## Course above par for wildlife

fearsome fungus or a castle shrouded in mist, people are being invited to share their spooky moments on the South Downs. The winner with the best image will receive a guided bat walk with Sussex Bat Group for up to four people. Simply snap away and #SpookySouthDowns. The deadline for entries is 31 October. Find out more [here](#).

### Embrace the darkness!

The South Downs National Park is one of only 21 International Dark Sky Reserves in the world – chosen because it has some of the best views of the starry night skies in the whole of the UK.



With the nights drawing in, autumn is a wonderful time to connect with nature on its grandest scale – the universe itself. Just check the weather forecast, pack some warm blankets and a hot drink, and head to one of the [National Park's 10 Dark Sky Discovery Sites](#). You'll be amazed at how many stars you can see with the naked eye – just make sure you pick a clear night!

### Forest bathing

We're coming to the latter stages of a long year and all the rushing around to get things done (don't even mention Christmas yet!) and the pressure of work targets are enough to make anyone feel a bit stressed! Why not enjoy a few hours of calmness and serenity by exploring one of the South Downs' many woods and forests?

Studies have found that "forest bathing" (Shinrin-yoku) has positive physiological effects, such as blood pressure reduction, improved immune systems, as well as the psychological effects of alleviating depression and improving mental health. Here are some [tips](#).

### Look out for the weird and wonderful

Try looking for different coloured fungi on your walk.



Fungi like the damp conditions among the fallen leaves, which create a wonderful rich earthy smell in the forest. Remember they don't all look like mushrooms and they don't all grow on the

ground – some grow on tree trunks or fallen branches. Fungi are essential to where they are found. They rot and recycle leaf litter, provide food for small animals and are great to admire. Remember to never pick and eat wild mushrooms unless they've been identified by an expert as they can be highly poisonous!

For more walking ideas this autumn check out the National Park's brand new walking hub:

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-walks/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-walks/)



**Pyecombe Golf Club is one of the best courses in the UK for butterflies and chalk grassland flowers, new research has found.**

Consultant ecologist Neil Hulme performed three detailed surveys of the course and found an impressive total of 34 species of butterfly, including rare species such as the Adonis Blue, Brown Hairstreak and Grizzled Skipper.

The nature success story comes after pioneering wildlife-friendly management of the course with the help of the South Downs National Park Authority, which shared the cost of special mowing equipment.

Ecologist Neil Hulme said: "Walking around this golf course is like walking through a nature reserve or one of the better Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Sussex. It's a good job I'm not a golfer as I'd deliberately spend the entire round in the rough, which is packed with an amazing variety of stunning wildflowers such as Round-headed Rampion, Horseshoe Vetch, Wild Marjoram, Common Rock-rose and Devil's-bit Scabious."

The club, which is situated to the north of Brighton & Hove, has been using a "cut and collect" mower to help manage chalk grassland and encourage the diversity of flowers.



Phillippa Morrison-Price, Lead Ranger for the Eastern Downs, said: "It's been a joy working with Pyecombe Golf Club, which cares so well for the wonderful mosaic of different habitat types found around this golf course. The areas of chalk grassland are particularly valuable for the plants and insects they support. The club should be very proud of what it has achieved here, demonstrating that sporting facilities and some of our most precious wildlife can happily exist side-by-side."

Simon Wells, Head Greenkeeper at Pyecombe, said: "The roughs now can be truly stunning and the club members have taken a sense of ownership of them and understand how privileged we are to be custodians of all these rare and wonderful habitats. It's great to see the fruits of our labour."

# Providing a local solution to sustainable meat production



**Laura Hockenhill is a development officer for Sussex Grazed, a new scheme launched by Brighton & Hove Food Partnership that is seeking to increase sustainability from the farm to the plate. She introduces the initiative and shares how you can get involved.**

The great Rudyard Kipling wrote: *“The Downs are sheep, the Weald is corn, You be glad you are Sussex born!”*

For 3,000 years or so, the South Downs have been sheep run. Farmers operated a corn and sheep method of agriculture. The sheep manure fertilised the corn fields before the animals were set out on the downland for grazing. This created a unique landscape which supported extensive chalk grassland, filled with internationally significant species such as the Sussex rampion and adonis blue. Up until the 1940’s, farming practices were low in intensity and in line with what we might now regard as ‘nature friendly’.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, farmers were pushed to produce more crops and grasslands were ploughed up and enriched for arable production as the country moved towards a more intensive farming model.

Today, we are in danger of losing our rare chalk grassland along with the incredible range of wildlife it supports. The introduction of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, as well as changes in land use have contributed to a 97 per cent national decline in traditionally managed wildflower-rich grasslands, leading to a significant loss of bumblebees, butterflies, farmland birds and wildflowers.



## Grazing for the future

A solution to this is a return to a more traditional, holistic system of farming on the Downs, allowing grazing animals to manage the landscape. Ponies, sheep and cows push back scrub on pasture, preventing monocultures from

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taking hold and promoting the success of chalk grassland species.

Conservation grazing may well be subsidised through government schemes and green finance, for those who are savvy enough to explore these opportunities, but many livestock farmers are still unable to run a viable farm business without relying upon the national meat market. This is largely due to the breakdown of regional food supply chains and the stronghold of supermarkets.

### Supporting local farmers

With global food insecurity pairing with a climate emergency, we need to see a return to more resilient food systems which take a place-based approach to production. This shift will need the support of government, producers, retailers and consumers to be successful.

**Sussex Grazed** is a **Changing Chalk** meat box scheme from Brighton and Hove Food Partnership which promotes conservation grazing on the Sussex Downs. We work with local farmers, who use a nature-friendly approach to provide delicious and sustainably produced meat to residents. The project also works to identify barriers and find solutions and opportunities to support a local market.

The animals’ varied diet of foraged herbs, scrub and grass means that the meat is rich and delicious, and not overly fatty. Following three successful shares, we are delighted with the excellent feedback we’ve received from customers looking for a better way to eat meat.

*‘Felt so good about this meat purchase – this is the way we would like to eat meat, when we eat meat. Totally delicious’ -* Kassia Zermon, Rose Hill Brighton

### Get Involved

Meat boxes are available through our **Open Food Network** site, a platform which supports transparency in the food system. By ordering in advance, we ensure that meat is produced to match demand, and there is minimal wastage. Collections take place at one of our hubs in the Downs, allowing you to engage with the landscape your meat is helping to restore and protect.

By purchasing a **Sussex Grazed** meat box, you not only receive high-quality, responsibly raised meat, but also support local farmers who are paid a fair price for what they have produced.

Follow us on our journey @sussexgrazed on Facebook and Instagram Visit **Brighton and Hove Food Partnership - Sussex Grazed**

*Sussex Grazed is a Brighton & Hove Food Partnership project for Changing Chalk. Led by the National Trust, Changing Chalk connects nature, people and heritage with a partnership goal to restore and reconnect fragmented areas of rare chalk grassland. It is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and People’s Postcode Lottery.*



## Rare species found at nature reserve as it marks birthday



This year marks the 30th anniversary of Benfield Hill being designated Hove's first and oldest Local Nature Reserve. Widely recognised as a 'hidden gem' in the National Park, it is one of the richest surviving remnants of old chalk grassland in the area.

To mark the milestone, the Benfield Wildlife and Conservation Group, which protects and promotes the hill, has been focused on developing awareness, understanding, and appreciation for this unique habitat and its rich biodiversity.

Activities have included developing partnerships and delivering a range of talks, walks and surveys, as well as various initiatives to engage with the local community.

This year, the hill has also revealed some exciting species finds, including a very rare orange conch moth of which there have been a handful of recorded sightings in Sussex. Hornet robberflies (*pictured right*), which had only been known in around 40 isolated breeding sites in the UK, have also been seen.



The nature reserve received extensive local and global news coverage of its thriving hazel dormice population and the conservation work it undertakes to protect them.

An emphasis on creating a rich social media content to reach new audiences has seen it add over 500 followers in six months and a grant from the National Park Authority will help with the installation of new information and interpretation boards on site.

Sally Wadsworth, Chair of the Benfield Wildlife and Conservation Group, said: "We can't do this without all the members, volunteers, partners, supporters who help us, and we are always on the lookout for people who want to get involved and make a difference."

More information can be found at [www.facebook.com/BenfieldWildlifeandConservationGroup](https://www.facebook.com/BenfieldWildlifeandConservationGroup) or email [benfieldlnr@gmail.com](mailto:benfieldlnr@gmail.com)

## What needs to be done to protect our precious rivers



The South Downs is internationally-renowned for its quintessentially English countryside, pretty chocolate-box villages, flower-rich chalk grasslands and stunning white cliffs.

Perhaps less known are the network of rivers and streams that crisscross this amazing landscape – yet they really are the beating heart of a complex ecosystem that relies on flowing freshwater!

The National Park's rivers and all their tributaries are life-giving arteries, supporting an incredible variety of plant, fish, bird, amphibian and insect species.

For this very reason river health is a key priority of the National Park Authority, which has been working for many years with landowners, farmers, key stakeholders and visitors to encourage good river management and reduce polluting run-off in order to help nature thrive.

To mark **World Rivers Day**, we've looked at why rivers are important, what we've done and are doing to help them, the challenges our waterways face and why they need our help.

### Why rivers are important

There are seven main rivers that run through the National Park – the Ouse, Cuckmere, Adur, Arun, Rother, Meon (*pictured above*), and Itchen – and, while there are lots of similarities, each have their own unique ecology and biodiversity.

As well as these rivers, there are a network of over 100km of crystal-clear chalk streams in the South Downs, many of them fed by springs rather than rain. These chalk streams are internationally rare – there's only about 200 of them in the world!

Carry out a survey and you'll be amazed what you can find, in particular the sheer breadth of species diversity. Kingfisher, otter, wigeon, water vole, bullhead, lapwing, eel, brown trout, and the endangered white-clawed crayfish, to name but a few, and that's before you've started looking at the scores of insect species.



## Win a pair of annual tickets to stunning Chawton House!



**To celebrate the 20th anniversary of opening to the public, Chawton House in Hampshire will be bringing together some of the most precious treasures in the collection for the first time.**

Covering the Knight and Austen family history, the women – including Jane Austen – who have shaped the estate and the remarkable collection of early women’s writing, *Treasures of Chawton House* will feature never-before-displayed objects, new acquisitions, old favourites, and works only found at Chawton House.

Owned by the Knight family for 445 years, **Chawton House** is best known in literary circles as having belonged to Jane Austen’s brother Edward. In 1809, it was Edward who gave his sisters, Jane and Cassandra, and their mother, a home at Chawton Cottage, where Jane wrote and revised her famous novels.

The exhibition features the never-before-displayed Grant of Arms – the official manuscript received by Edward Austen in 1812 that gave him permission to change his name to Knight and thus inherit the Chawton and Godmersham estates. The Grant of Arms remains in its original presentation case complete with his golden Knight seals. It was Edward’s lucky inheritance that brought Jane Austen to the village of Chawton, opening up a whole new world for the author to be inspired by. Twenty years ago, and because Chawton House had inspired the work of Jane Austen, it became home to a remarkable collection of early women’s writing which has inspired research and public programming ever since.

The exhibition, mounted throughout the house, will bring together the stars of this collection, showcasing the range and variety of women’s writing.

We’ve teamed up with Chawton House to offer a pair of annual tickets. People signing up to the newsletter during October will be automatically entered into the draw.

Those who are already signed up can email “Jane Austen” to [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk) before midnight on 31 October. Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).

These rivers are among the richest freshwater ecosystems in the UK and the picturesque river valleys are an integral part of the landscape and local communities. Hydrological systems are ultimately all connected, so healthy rivers and streams means healthy soils, better crops, healthy trees, more biodiversity, cleaner drinking water and healthier seas and oceans. The National Park provides drinking water to over 2m people along the south coast, so it’s in everyone’s interest that our waterways are in good condition.

While the biodiversity today might seem impressive, step back 100 years and our rivers would have been buzzing with much more life. Across the UK, over three quarters of rivers fail to meet the required standards for river health and climate change is putting even more pressure on these delicate freshwater habitats. In some cases, biodiversity is merely surviving, rather than thriving, and that’s why rivers really do need our help.

### Successes since the National Park was created



The River Meon in Hampshire has seen the first green shoots of recovery and is an example of what can be achieved with strong partnership working.

A species you may be lucky enough to spot is

the water vole, an animal that was decimated due to predation by the non-native species, the mink.

Water voles are essentially ecosystem engineers – their burrowing and feeding behaviour along the edges of watercourses creates the conditions for other animals and plants to thrive.

The water vole has made a remarkable comeback in the South Downs National Park thanks to the work of the Meon Valley Partnership. Over a period of six years, a total of 2,833 water voles were released to 30 locations along the stretch of the river.

The project ticks every box for why the South Downs became a National Park – bringing volunteers, landowners and the local community together to care for landscapes and support wildlife.

The resurgence of water vole has improved the overall health of the river and co-incided with the return of another species – the otter. It’s believed there are now three breeding females on the river.

The Meon Valley Partnership, which includes the SDNPA and other partners such as the Environment Agency, Portsmouth Water and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, has worked with landowners, local fishing groups, and volunteers to help restore river banks and encourage more nature-friendly land management.

**To read the full piece and find out what needs to be done to help river biodiversity return, visit [this webpage](#).**

## Celebrating Black History Month: Nurturing nature's legacy



**For Black History Month, OlaOlu Adedayo, a Co-opted Member of the National Park's Policy and Resources Committee, shares his love of the South Downs and what this important time of year means to him.**

As the vibrant hues of autumn leaves paint the landscape, I find solace and purpose in the embrace of nature.

As a dedicated volunteer for the South Downs National Park Authority, my journey is not merely about conservation; it is a heartfelt commitment to safeguarding the planet's most precious treasures.

Born under the African sun, love led me to the heart of this nation's natural wonders. My roots may stretch across borders, but my connection to the earth knows no bounds. The allure of the outdoors transcends cultural differences, uniting us all in a common cause - to preserve the beauty that sustains us.



In my role as a co-opted member of the Policy and Resources Committee, I bear witness to the power of collective action.

I have been privileged to witness discussions that intertwine the threads of climate consciousness and inclusivity.

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Climate change, an indiscriminate force, compels us to rise above divisions, recognizing that its impact knows no colour or creed.

Together, we labour towards sustainable solutions, weaving a tapestry of resilience that future generations will inherit.

Black History Month is not only a time to reflect on the trials and triumphs of those who came before us, but also an opportunity to amplify voices that have long been marginalized in the environmental narrative.



My presence in this realm is a testament to the enduring spirit of pioneers who paved the way for individuals like myself to stand tall amidst the grandeur of nature.

As an immigrant, my perspective is coloured by the tapestry of experiences that have shaped my journey.

My work experience in brand communication and engagement provides a unique lens through which I view the natural world.

It allows me to bridge the gap between policy and public perception, ensuring that our message of conservation is clear, resonant, and inclusive.

In this mosaic of identities, I find strength, knowing that my presence enriches the diverse fabric of the National Park community.

Together, we celebrate not only the natural wonders that grace our parks, but also the collective human spirit that strives to protect them.

So, this Black History Month, let us remember that the legacy we leave behind is not just etched in stone, but in the hearts of those who share this planet.

Let us stand united in our pursuit of a sustainable future, where every voice is heard, every heritage honoured, and every tree stands tall in testament to the resilience of nature and humanity.



## 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/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



Pumpkins in the field at Rogate, West Sussex



- Head to the beautiful landscape of Kingley Vale for a wildlife tracking day with expert guide John Ryder. You'll learn how to identify wildlife from their tracks and other signs, and then take a walk around Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve to put what you have learnt into practice. Spaces are limited and booking is essential for the day on 18 October. Please contact [rachel.guy@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:rachel.guy@naturalengland.org.uk) to secure your place.
- Thousands of runners are getting ready to put their best feet forward for the annual [Beachy Head Marathon](#). The Beachy Head Marathon, Beachy Head Ultramarathon and Beachy Head 10K are on 21 October with the Beachy Head Half Marathon on 22 October. Spectators are encouraged to show their support and cheer on the participants along the route. A lone piper will play at the start point on the Saturday and also the West Dean steps leading up to the Cuckmere.
- Are you interested in finding out more about swifts, swallows and house martins and how we can reverse their decline? A talk is being given by local expert Paul Stevens at 7pm on 23 October at the Fauna Taproom, Old Engine Shed, Arundel. For more information contact [green.team.arundel@gmail.com](mailto:green.team.arundel@gmail.com)
- Discover the crisp colours this autumn half term at [Amberley Museum](#). From Wednesday to Friday (25-29 October) there will be hands-on leaf printing activities for children of all ages from 11am to 3pm. Visit the pottery where resident potter Nancy Scantlebury-Thompson will be holding 'play with clay' sessions throughout half term. Visitors can have a go at making a pumpkin, witch/wizards hats and cats.
- Head to [Queen Elizabeth Country Park](#), near Waterlooville, for all things monstrous this Halloween for its outdoor family trail. Find the creatures, solve the clues and try not to get spooked along the way! Each activity pack comes with a trail guide, pack of pencils, a creepy craft and a Spooktacular gift. The trail is open from 21 to 29 October.

### Pic credits

P1 Peter Brooks; P2 (water vole) Dick Hawkes; P3 left Ian Brierley; P3 right (Bedham Church) Jamie Fielding; p4 left Verity Stannard; P4 right Neil Hulme; P5 left Sussex Grazed; P6 right Daniel Greenwood; P8 left Sam Moore; P8 right Jeff Travis; P9 (pumpkins at Rogate) Emily Summers-Mileman.