



Hi Everyone,

Black Shed Flowers

- Back in November, Paul Stickland of, near Sherborne talked entertainingly to a packed house about his cut flower business which is run without herbicides or pesticides, or indeed any watering! As little soil as possible is left uncovered and his other main recommendation was to use Sylvagrow, RHS non-peat compost, which we found recently at a competitive rate at 'Holme for Gardens'. Great to know, as I have not always been very successful with peat-free composts.

'Wilding' film

- In early January around 40 of us watched the film '**Wilding**' and had an opportunity for discussion over home-made Venison casserole or chick pea curry. The film, about the land at the Knepp estate in Sussex, showed the reassuring resilience of nature when we really allow things to recover...it showed what is possible.

BUT... the most asked question was,

'How can we produce enough food for ourselves if we phase out modern industrial farming?'

The answer will lie in **Regenerative Farming**, different from the Knepp project, which is an inspiring experiment that can be repeated to boost biodiversity where more marginal land can be spared from agriculture, and which can help to join, enlarge and improve existing valuable natural spaces.

The way that we have farmed over the last 70 years combined with other additional effects of climate change, has caused us huge and complex problems. Our soils, water supplies, pollinating insects, natural resources and indeed profits will not last long into the future if we carry on as we are. We are part of nature and ignore that at our peril.

Just as an example, have you noticed how expensive chocolate has become recently? One of the major reasons for this is that the El Niño effect has exacerbated drought in West Africa where 70% of cocoa beans are grown. Extreme droughts are likely to become more severe and frequent in the UK, particularly in the South and **nature-based solutions** will be vital to conserve water.

Regenerative agriculture, farming alongside nature rather than against it, is going to be key to global food security. However, to be taken up by farmers, it must provide a proper living, which will hopefully be assured in the UK as the government's ELMS farming subsidies become widespread.

For more information the **Nature Friendly Farming Network**, www.nffn.org.uk have a very well evidenced website where they discuss the necessity of moving to a method of farming that

safeguards our future food supply. To quote them, *'Our mission is to take nature-friendly farming to a new level, making it mainstream. Nature-friendly farmers all over the UK are doing so in ways that mitigate climate change, reverse biodiversity decline and safeguard the future of UK agriculture.'*

Although the best evidence points to a current loss of maybe 27% of food production with regenerative rather than industrial farming, it does provide a sustainable way forward which will halt the current destruction of our soils. This loss could be offset by reducing the 30% plus wastage of our food as we do at present. We can also continue to move towards increasing vegetable protein in our diets.

We have a copy of the **'Wilding' DVD** in the Village Hall library if you would like to borrow it sometime.

Underlining this approach, I really enjoyed the film **'Rachel's farm'**, on iPlayer at the moment. It tells the story of well-known actor, Rachel Ward, who has responded to the shock of unprecedented bush fires and droughts around her Australian stock farm by starting a personal journey to regenerate the land and particularly the soil.

Sorry, that was all rather wordy, but it is a question that is often asked and which deserves discussion!

Bees

- In February Patti Sandham, who you may know as an experienced local beekeeper, gave an interesting and amusing talk about how to begin keeping bees. She included all the possible pitfalls and spoke about the pressures bees are under. An interesting 'take home' note was that nearly all supermarket honey is laced with sugar syrup! So, if you want the real thing, buy locally. Swanage News was fascinated!

<https://www.swanage.news/worth-matravers-bee-expert-looks-to-end-purbeck-honey-drought/>

- You may have heard the recent good news that the new government has [denied the use](#) of a [neonicotinoid](#) insecticide, thiamethoxam, for growing sugar beet. Banned for use in agriculture in 2018, the previous UK government allowed its 'emergency' use four years in a row ignoring the advice of its own experts. There is clear evidence that this neonicotinoid is extremely toxic to bees and other pollinators and this is good progress to protect them. Now the government needs to support farmers to move away from banned pesticides.

Swifts...exciting news

We have been working with the Church and Swanage and Purbeck Swift Group who have now installed 6 **Swift boxes** in St. Nick's Church tower. A camera will shortly be added which will hopefully give views of nesting birds, so now all we have to do is look forward to early May and the returning birds..

Friday 21st March 7.30pm Worth Matravers Village Hall

Helping Swifts in Purbeck: the work of the Swanage and Purbeck Swift Group



Picture courtesy: Celia Smith

Across the country, groups of swift enthusiasts are getting together to take action to try to slow, stop and ideally reverse the decline in swift numbers

Join us and our guest speaker Richard Cudlow for this free event to find out more about swifts, the work of the group, and what we can do to help swifts in our community

Donations will be much appreciated on the night. Arrive early for teas & coffees

Save the Date!

Thursday 24th April 7.30pm Worth Matravers Village Hall

Butterflies of Worth Matravers

Mike Wenham, local butterfly enthusiast, will be giving a talk on identifying local butterflies, and we'll be looking at what we can all do to encourage them in our own gardens.

Bug Hotel progress

The stormy weather in December caused us to postpone our Bug Hotel meeting but inadvertently gave us a real success. Instead, family groups each built a section, with plenty of photos of people doing a great job, having fun and encouraging minibeasts.

And more good news to finish with:

Cirl Buntings

Cirl Buntings were once common farmland birds that have been decreasing in population and range over the last half century. At one point they were only to be found in south Devon, but now they are spreading out into Dorset and 11 have been seen off the Bonvils road and also some at Durlston, where they bred last year. Let's hope we have them breeding at Worth this year. Listen out for the singing, yellow-striped males that look a little like small, striped Yellowhammers whose call is a trill on one note, without the prolonged 'cheese' of the Yellowhammer. Last summer, I regularly heard and saw another Red-listed bird, the Corn Bunting by Renscombe car park. Its song supposed to sound like jangling keys!

Looking forward to more sun and a Spring full of thriving nature in Purbeck.

Best wishes,



Kathy Hollidge

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If you'd like to be in our popular WhatsApp group which mainly covers local wildlife sightings just drop me your name and phone number.

We now have our own mini library of inspiring natural history/environmental books in the Village Hall. Anyone is welcome to borrow them and they can either be returned to the Hall or any committee member. If you can add to it, that would be great.

More often than not, and if it is not raining or blowing a gale, a group of us garden at the Withy Bed, Begbie Meadow or the Churchyard on Friday mornings at 10am. We do some planting but most of the work involves weeding or keeping Ivy and Brambles under control so that weedkiller doesn't have to be used. It often involves a coffee afterwards and is always a fun social occasion, so do come and join us when you can make it! Give me a ring to check if it's on.

Pat Milligan collects **stamps** to raise money for a charity that works to end the cruel Bear bile trade. Your stamps can be left in the bus shelter or given to Pat or any SW committee member.

***Sustainable Worth** has been created to counter the impact of Climate Change and to protect and restore local wildlife. We want to live more sustainably and bring people together by sharing knowledge and providing accessible solutions which are engaging and fun.*