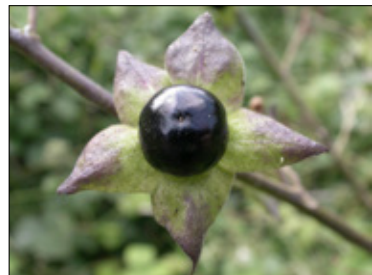


Deadly nightshade by Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust

"A poison bouquet to strike him down"

June 16th is Bloomsday, a celebration of the life of James Joyce, whose novel Ulysses follows Leopold Bloom's escapades on that June date in 1904. Throughout Ulysses, Joyce uses flowers to symbolize romance and the lure of the exotic. Aside from fornication Joyce also tackles expiration, hallucination and urination. All of which (well, apart from the urination) remind me of another bloom that will be raising hell around Sussex in June.

Deadly nightshade looks innocent enough. A tall plant with lush leaves and purple, bell-shaped flowers. Later in the year the glossy berries will catch your eye; dangling temptingly like black pearls. It's in the plant family Solanaceae; related to potatoes and tomatoes. But deadly nightshade isn't the sort of relative you'd invite round for dinner. And you certainly wouldn't want it anywhere near the food. It is lethally poisonous.



Deadly Nightshade
c Graeme Lyons

It's name should be warning enough (and if not, colloquial nicknames such as 'Satan's Rhubarb' and 'Death Cherries' underline the message). In 1597, Elizabethan physician John Gerard warned us 'banish it from your gardens' and steer well clear but we obviously weren't paying attention. An internet search today reveals recent stories of accidental deaths, comatose children and a naked, hallucinating German monk.

It is reported (but possibly exaggerated) that just three berries will kill you. Symptoms start with a dry mouth, dizziness and urinary retention (ha – so there was a link to urination after all!) and progress to delirium, convulsions and a heartbeat so furious that it can be heard from several feet away. It's all downhill from there. Incredibly, the berries are the safest part of the plant – you wouldn't want to go anywhere near the roots.

Wicked witches would use the berries in a potion to make their broomsticks rise. Wicked women in Venice, looking for a similar reaction in their men, used deadly nightshade eye drops to dilate their pupils. The plant's scientific name belladonna means 'beautiful woman.' The potential side effects of this beautification would later be the answer to the question 'how do you make a Venetian blind?'

Barcombe botanist David Lang tells a tale of a student found staggering the streets drunk and disorderly. Nothing new there – until a police doctor saw his wide eyes and realised he had been poisoned by belladonna. He was rushed to hospital where it transpired that his landlady was trying to extract medicine from the berries and was straining them through the same strainer she was using to make his coffee each morning. You won't get a kick like that in Costa. So, be cautious of this killer as you walk the Downs in June to ensure that your life, which to paraphrase Mr Joyce is already a 'parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity', is not made any briefer.



Deadly nightshade flower
c Graeme Lyons

Sussex Wildlife Trust is an independent charity caring for wildlife and habitats throughout Sussex. Founded in 1961, we have worked with local people for over half a century to make Sussex richer in wildlife.

We rely on the support of our members to help protect our rich natural heritage. Please consider supporting our work. As a member you will be invited to join Michael Blencowe on our regular wildlife walks and also enjoy free events, discounts on wildlife courses, *Wildlife* magazine and our Sussex guide book, *Discovering Wildlife*. It's easy to join online at www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/join or over the phone on 01273 497532.

www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk



RSPB Events for June 2019

APULDRAM

Saturday 1 June

Morning Bird Walk on Fishbourne Marshes with Roger Morris of the RSPB Chichester Local Group. Meet by car park next to Rymans, Map Ref: SU841033 at 10.00 am 01243 262833

DUNCTON

Friday 7 June

Evening walk to see and hear nightjars/woodcock on Lavington Common with Bob Yarham of the RSPB. Meet in car park, Map Ref: SU952187 at 8.00 pm 01243 262833

SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST June 2019

SLINDON

Tuesday 4 June

Evening Walk on The Rise of Northwood with David Hart from 7.0 pm until 9.30 pm approx. Meet in Northwood car park, at end of Courthill Road, Slindon BN18 0RL. Donations to the Trust appreciated. 01243 262833

Chichester Conservancy Volunteers June 2019

EBERNOE

Sunday 16 June

Conservation – Bracken Control with Richard Wilson of the Chichester Conservation Volunteers on Ebernoe Common. Meet in church car park at 10.00 am 01243 528056

WOOLBEDING

Sunday 23 June

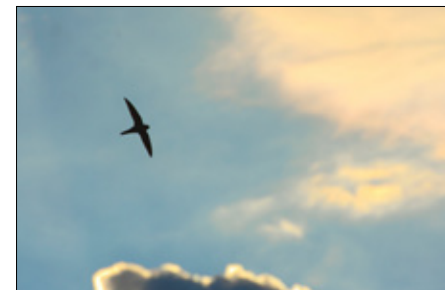
Conservation – Himalayan Balsam Control with Scot Robertson of the Chichester Conservation Volunteers on The River Rother at 10.00 am 01243 552113 / 07722 025339



Far up in the summer sky...

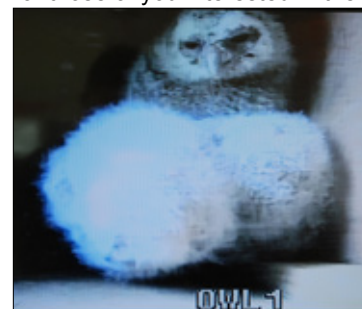
Walking around our reserves on a warm sunny day in June I revel in the rich continuous outpouring of silvery warbles and trills cascading down from the skies far above me. This is the skylarks' song and the quintessential sound of the summer countryside. It can be hard to spot this little lark against the bright sky despite its ability to hang in the air on straight angular wings while it delivers its song for several minutes at a time. However, if you see one perched on a post you will discover a simple brown streaked bird which often raises a crest on its head when alarmed or excited.

However, the real masters of the summer sky are far, far higher. Higher still than the skylark, resembling little black anchors, swifts hurtle through the air at break-neck speed, reminiscent of dog-fighting WWII pilots, screaming like banshees to one another. These superb fliers only land to breed. From the time the fledglings take their very first flight, they will not touch down again until they make a nest. They do everything on the wing: eat, drink, preen, mate, they even sleep in flight! The nest is built by both adults out of any material that can be gathered on the wing, including feathers, paper, straw, hay and seeds. It is located high up in the roof space under the eaves of old houses and churches where the birds are able to drop into the air from the nest entrance.



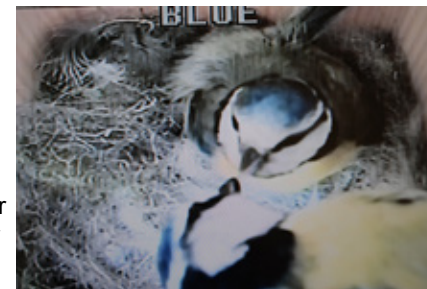
Swift - Ben Andrew

For those of you interested in the fortunes of our nestcam 'reality TV stars' our tawny owl hatched all three eggs and the fluffy owlets have been delighting us with lovely images. They have grown rapidly and got curious about the world outside their box. Tawny owl chicks remain in the nest for 25 – 30 days before moving out onto nearby branches, an act called 'branching'. However, they won't actually fly until approximately 32 -37 days old and will still be dependant on their parents feeding them for a further three months.



Tawny owl chicks

Bue Tits



The kestrel laid 5 eggs and will incubate for while the two pairs of blue tits laid clutches of which are hatching at the time of writing. A pair cast, currently building their nest in which they



Kestrel and eggs

approximately 4 weeks eight and nine eggs of sparrows are the latest characters to join the will will lay four or five eggs.



RSPB Pagham Harbour & Medmerry

June

Saturday 01 June, RSPB Pagham Harbour Open Day. To celebrate our wonderful reserve and the work we have done on our Discovery Zone, we are inviting you to try your hand at a host of **FREE** activities from pond dipping and bug hunting, to mud-sifting, arts & crafts and wildlife watching! BBC One Show's Mike Dilger will be joining in the fun as our special guest! Come on down and have a fun-filled day getting closer to nature.

10am – 4pm

All activities FREE – please note booking essential for Pond-dipping, Mud-sifting and Bug hunting. To book your places go to www.eventbrite.co.uk

Saturday 08 June, Orchids in June. Orchids have always had an air of mystery. Join our Warden looking for these gorgeous plants and learn about the secret lives of the ones that occur on our reserve.

11am (duration 1 hour)

Booking essential £4 per person / £2 members

Sunday 09 June, Wildlife Photography Workshop. This all-day workshop provides an introduction to the key principles and techniques for Nature and Close-up/Macro photography. The workshop will combine theory with opportunities to put into practice what you have learnt regarding camera settings and image composition on our beautiful reserve. During the practical session walks there will hopefully be opportunities for you to try and capture images of Orchids, Dragonflies and insects in addition to birds around the reserve.

8.30am (duration 8 hours)

Booking essential £25 per person / £20 members

Sunday 09 June, Someone to Guide You.

Unsure of what that bird is? Our friendly guides will be at our **Church Norton Hide, RSPB Pagham Harbour, PO20 9DT**, to help you spot and identify spring arrivals and the wildlife that you see.

10am – 1.30pm Drop-in, Free

Saturday 15 June, Bird Watching for Beginners – Pagham Harbour's Birds of Summer. Can you separate your chiffchaffs from your willow warblers? Your sand martins from your house martins and swallows? Common terns from little terns? Following the format of our popular Bird Watching for Beginners classes, this course of two workshops focuses on our summer visitors, including warblers, hirundines and terns, plus much more. Starting with a short theory session, followed by a practical walk on our wonderful reserve, we look at identification through shape, colour, behaviour, song and habitat, plus discussing ecology, migration and why these birds are attracted to RSPB Pagham Harbour.

Full course dates are:

15 June

06 July

**09.30am (duration 3 hours) Booking essential
£10 per person (£8 RSPB members) per class
£20 per person (£16 RSPB members) whole course**

Check out our website www.rspb.org/paghamharbour for full events program.

RSPB Pagham Harbour & Medmerry Visitor Centre, Selsey Road, Sidlesham PO20 7NE

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www.rspb.org.uk/paghamharbour

Tel: 01243 641508

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