

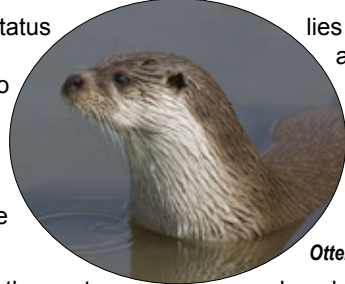
Otter by Michael Blencowe of the Sussex Wildlife Trust The return of the celluloid heroes

Sleek muscular physique. Dynamic aquatic killer. Mysterious enigmatic loner. You can see why otters shared the cinema box office with James Bond in the Sixties and Seventies. Otters are natural film stars, the Sean Connery of British mammals (with a slightly hairier chest).

I remember two otter-based films from my childhood. I caught 'Tarka the Otter' at the local Odeon and the superior 'Ring of Bright Water' always won over 'Goldfinger' on the TV at Christmas. From the opening man-meets-otter sequence (both the greatest and silliest scene ever committed to celluloid) through to Val Doonican's closing credits crooning - it's a classic!

But behind the otter's silver-screen celebrity status Throughout most of the last century our rivers drained and destroyed. Otters were forced into otters struggled on until the 1960s.

And with our heroes out of the picture the or were 'liberated' from fur farms, rose to These voracious predators attacked our native voles across Sussex.



lies a darker, sadder tale. Wild otters in Britain were in trouble. and wetland habitats were in a shocking state – polluted, exile in the far flung corners of Britain. The last Sussex

bad guys muscled in. American mink, which escaped the top of the food chain and terrorised our waterways. wetland wildlife, wiping out entire populations of water

Otter c Derek Middleton

But this screenplay has a happy ending. Over the past decades we've cleaned up our act and a lot of work has been undertaken to improve rivers and wetlands in Sussex. Otters are wandering, territorial animals – each otter needs 40 km of river to make its home - but projects undertaken by conservation groups such as Sussex Wildlife Trust working with local landowners have provided these

connected, wetland habitats. And what is good for the otter is good for us too. By undertaking wetland habitat improvements for wildlife - such as planting floodplain woodland or creating water meadows - our countryside regains its powers as water purifier, erosion controller and flood regulator.

Over the past years footprints, droppings and fleeting glimpses have given tantalising evidence that these mammalian movie stars are attempting a comeback in Sussex after half a century. Recently, night vision trail cameras were rolling and filmed a female otter as she made her Sussex small screen debut - possibly the first time a wild otter has ever been filmed in our county. But the real showstopper came when these cameras later captured footage of one - or possibly two - otter cubs; evidence that otters are breeding again in Sussex. With this dramatic plot twist there is plenty of potential for a sequel. The dream that one day we could see these incredible animals swimming in all the restored and vibrant rivers of Sussex is a step closer to becoming a reality.



Otter on ice c Derek Middleton

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

Chichester Conservancy Volunteers February 2019

LAVINGTON Sunday 3 February

Conservation – Heathland Management with Richard Wilson of the Chichester Conservation Volunteers on Lavington Plantation. Meet at 10.00 am. 01243 528056

HEYSHOTT Sunday 17 February

Conservation – Downland Management with Scott Robertson of the Chichester Conservation Volunteers on Heyshott Down. Meet at 10.00 am. 01243 552113 or 07815 021331

10) Who founded the Slimbridge bird sanctuary?

11) Where does mistletoe grow? (Last month?)

12) What meadow flower is also named *Ranunculus acris*?



Otter c Darin Smith
info@wildstock.co.uk



RSPB Events for February 2019

NORTH MUNDHAM

Sunday 10 February

Morning Bird Walk around Chichester Gravel Pits with Carol Griffiths of the RSPB Chichester Local Group. Meet in School Lane, Map Ref: SU873029 at 10.00 am 01243 262833

CHICHESTER

Thursday 28 February

Illustrated Talk by Peter Holden on "Birds Without Borders" to the RSPB Chichester Local Group at The Pallant Suite, Masonic Hall, South Pallant, Chichester at 7.30 pm

Entrance members £2-50/visitors £5-00 01243 262833
wheelchair access

SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST April 2018

CHICHESTER

Tuesday 27 February

Illustrated Talk by Jenny Etienne on 'Belize' to the Sussex Wildlife Trust, Friends Meeting House, Priory Road, Chichester at 7.30 pm

Entrance Members £3-00/Visitors £4-00 01243 262833
wheelchair access

Crafty Natter Club

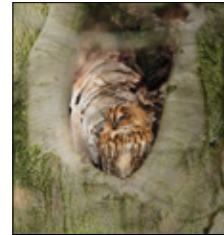
Selsey Methodist Church

1st and 3rd Wednesday ~ 2-4pm (in the large hall)

For more information contact Lisa Allinson on 601032

Show your love of the natural world this February

It's February and the curlew's beautiful evocative call drifts across the harbour. It is an eerie, lonely call, but at this time of year may well attract the attentions of another curlew. Although they can be heard throughout the year, it is now that they start to call more frequently in preparation for the breeding season. Instantly recognisable by their long down-curved bill, these large long-legged waders will breed in uplands and moors. Despite being a common sight across our reserves of Pagham Harbour & Medmerry, the curlew is one of our most rapidly declining breeding bird species, with our changing climates effects on their breeding habitat being cited as one of the main causes.



Tawny Owl c Ben Andrew

Equally haunting is the night-time call of the tawny owl. The well-known 'twit-twoo' is actually two birds calling to one another. The male starts to proclaim his territory and court females in with a more accurate 'hooo-hoo-hooo', while the female provides the 'kee-wick' part of the duet. Like the curlew, their calls can be heard more regularly at this time of year.

Many of our resident birds will start to look for partners and pair up now, giving them a head start over migrating species. As avian minds turn to romance, so do ours with Valentine's Day. However, it is not just love for a partner that we may think about...

Many people will be posting images on social media as part of the #showthelove campaign. This national campaign led by the Climate Coalition with over 130 members, including the RSPB, is dedicated to climate action. However, anyone can get involved. You could simply wear a green two-tone heart that is the campaign's logo. If you want to be more active, you can post photos online of your favourite natural places or species that have been or may be threatened by climate change. Alternatively, you could let us know about changes in nature you have noticed, such as snowdrops flowering earlier or butterflies emerging from hibernation earlier. We have records from our Pagham Harbour reserve showing quite clearly a pattern of earlier natural sightings and our Medmerry reserve itself is a direct result of the need to take action in light of increasing winter storms and the consistent threat of flooding. There are many arguments and theories around global warming and it's causes but there is no denying our climate is changing.

#showthelove runs from 7 – 14 February.



RSPB Pagham Harbour & Medmerry

February

Sunday 10 February, Wildlife Photography Workshop. This all-day practical workshop gives an introduction to basic techniques for wildlife photography, combining theory with opportunities to practice what you learn on our beautiful reserve.

8.30am (duration 8 hours)

Booking essential £25 per person / £20 members

Sunday 10 February, Someone to Guide You.

Unsure of what that bird is? Our friendly guides will be at our brand new **Ferry Pool Hide, Pagham Harbour** to help you spot and identify the wildlife that you see.

10am – 2pm Drop-in. Free

Saturday 16 February, Artists Wildlife Painting Workshop.

This all-day workshop gives an introduction to basic techniques of watercolour painting combining a little theory with a lot of practical application and advice. Although wildlife based, the principles can be applied in a wider context. The session is aimed at beginners and those returning to an old hobby after work. Good quality paints, paper and brushes will be supplied, just bring your enthusiasm.

9.30am (duration 7 hours)

Booking essential, £20 per person / £16 members

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14 Domehouse Close
Selsey, Nr Chichester,
West Sussex, PO20 0UB

Colin Rose
Tel/Fax: **01243 607255**
Mobile: **07790 717706**



Curlew c Andy Hay



Starling in box c Eleanor Bentall

Half-term activities

During half-term we will be running family events, plus of course we have a selection of self-led activities available every day, from our Visitor Centre

March

Sunday 10 March, Discover Pagham Harbour (west) Guided

Walk. Our own 'West Side' story with winter leavers vs spring arrivals! Join us for this gentle 4 mile walk combining wildlife with the Harbours historic past while looking out for the last of our winter visitors such as pintail ducks and brent geese and the wheatear, first of our summer migrants.

10am (duration 3½ hours)

Booking essential, £7 per person / £4 members

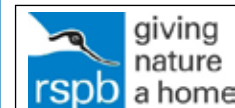
Check out our website www.rspb.org/paghamharbour for full events program.

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

Email: pagham.harbour@rspb.org.uk

Tel: 01243 641508

www.rspb.org.uk/paghamharbour



Are you a handy person? Can you spare a couple of hours a week?

RSPB Pagham Harbour & Medmerry is looking for a Volunteer Handyperson to help around it's Visitor Centre at Sidlesham The role would include general repairs and maintenance checks. Please contact the reserve by emailing pagham.harbour@rspb.org.uk

SELSEY METHODIST CHURCH

Rooms in our premises including kitchen facilities, are available for hire. Please phone 01243 601439 for details.

Our minister is Revd

Bruce Allinson 601032

