

# Growing Connections

## The West Weald Landscape Project Newsletter

### Editorial by Gill Lewis

Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer,  
Arun & Western Rother, Environment Agency



Working with land owners and managers is a crucial part of the West Weald Landscape Project (WWLP). By working with landowners as a partnership we can achieve multiple environmental gains, from healthier soil and cleaner water to improved biodiversity and conservation of key species. Payments and grants through statutory schemes enable farmland to contribute towards maintaining and improving the West Weald's landscape without financial losses and also provide rural enterprises with future resilience. For our part, the Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) initiative offers free advice and training (see 'Information') to farmers to raise awareness of local water quality and how small changes in land management can improve the chemical and ecological quality of rivers, streams, and lakes. This issue focuses on how such a partnership approach is vital to ensure that we continue to deliver positive change in these challenging economic times.

### The Changing Landscape of Conservation & Management

Our work to look after and further improve a healthy natural environment in the West Weald continues apace, despite the changing nature of conservation work which faces substantial challenges, not least financial in the current climate. Our mission and resolve remain, although we will need to be ever more imaginative and collaborative in how we achieve our objectives as part of the "Big Society". Government grant support for nature-friendly land management will likely diminish in the future, making it even more important for us to secure additional resources for the the West Weald and our Project to continue to freely provide land management advice and habitat improvements.

The importance of what we do is being increasingly recognised by decision-makers. The recent DEFRA review document *Making Space for Nature* makes recommendations on further extending our approach of enhancing ecological networks across large areas to benefit wildlife, the 'ecosystem services' that nature provides freely, and people themselves. Furthermore, the Government is currently consulting on a Natural Environment White Paper to shape future nature conservation at a landscape scale, as championed by The Wildlife Trusts under the "Living Landscapes" initiative. Many challenges lie ahead, but there has never been a more opportune moment to realise our vision of a healthy natural environment by working with all interested parties.

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### Information

#### Catchment Sensitive Farming

– free advice is available on topics ranging from nutrient management plans and NVZ's to slurry/manure handling audits and soil sampling. Tel. 07887 922853.

#### Funding for practical conservation works

is available this winter from the WWLP.

### Events

Farming and Woodland Management – free landowner workshop, **Dunsfold - Saturday 16th October**. Tel. 07854 163664.

'Apples and Animals' Family Fun Day at **Fishers Farm Park**, Wisborough Green – free WWLP event - **Saturday 30th October**.

#### Managing Grassland for Horses

– free WWLP-CSF eve. workshop, **Kirdford, Thursday 18th November**. Tel. 01273 497515.

*This project is based at the Sussex Wildlife Trust and is supported by*

*The Tubney Charitable Trust, BBC Wildlife Fund and others.*

*A broad partnership of organisations helps to steer and deliver the project.*

# News in Brief

## TV Spotlight Shines on our Shyest Species!

Both the West Weald Landscape Project (WWLP) and Sussex Wildlife Trust (SxWT) have benefitted from BBC TV interest in some of our special secretive species in recent months. WWLP Manager Rich Howorth appeared live on the BBC Two *Wild Night In* fundraising appeal broadcast at London Zoo in June, talking about his work with local landowners to conserve rare barbastelle bats living at Ebernoe Common and The Mens nature reserves. Meanwhile SxWT Ecologist Graeme Lyons also featured on the BBC's *Finn's Country* in August to reveal the secrets of another hidden treasure, the seldom-seen yet nationally important community of beetles living in dead wood in these two woodlands. Lastly, as a bumper fungi season gathers pace, SxWT Interpretation Officer Neil Fletcher also appeared on this programme in September to uncover some fascinating facts about these exotic organisms that are now coming to the surface – see the [footage here](#) .



Garlic-scented Toadstool  
(Graeme Lyons/SWT)

## How are our Habitats? Traditional Orchards & Local Fruits

The WWLP has been carrying out field surveys of priority habitats to assess both their occurrence and ecological condition across the landscape. This will enable any changes over time to be monitored, with the aim of demonstrating future improvements from our land management advisory work. Baseline surveys of ancient woodlands, grasslands, hedgerows and traditional orchards have all been carried out this year, leading to the discovery of new valuable areas and enabling work with landowners to promote the ecological health of their land.

Traditional orchards represent both a productive land use and valuable wildlife habitat – in fact they are now listed as a national conservation priority under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). They are important for many species, including rare birds (e.g. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker), deadwood beetles notably the Noble Chafer, and fungi such as the Orchard Tooth fungus. The WWLP has been working with the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) this year to carry out local surveys of our remaining old orchards. We are running an 'Apple Day' event at Fishers Farm Park (see 'Events') where we will be planting a new orchard of local apples such as Sussex Mother, Crawley Reinette and Wadhurst Pippin.



Traditional Apple Orchard  
(Rich Howorth/SWT)

## Landowner Support Update

HLS - four further farms assisted to enter.  
ELS - training provided in on-line submission.  
EWGS - advice given to access 80% WIGs.

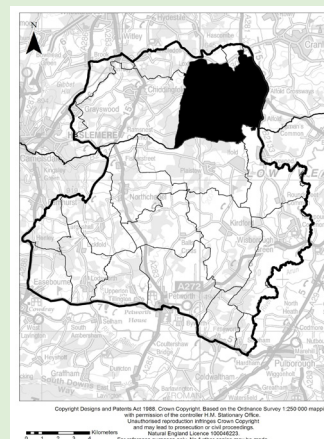
See our [our leaflet](#) *Working with Landowners and Farmers* for our services!

## Parish focus – Dunsfold

### "A Most Wooded Parish" by Alan Ground

Dunsfold is one of the most wooded parishes in England, a rural area in south-west Surrey whose unique character has developed in its remote wooded setting over the last millennium. Pevsner, writing on Surrey, described it as "An attractive, genuine village ... mostly built along the side of an enormous long common, narrow at the north end but widening out into something of the size and wildness of a heath at the south end, with scattered houses round the edge completely lost in scrub"! The description of Dunsfold's 80 acres of Commons, ponds and woodlands remains valid today, the landscape setting lying within an "Area of Great Landscape Value".

Read the rest of this article at [www.westweald.org.uk/dunsfold.htm](http://www.westweald.org.uk/dunsfold.htm) .



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