

Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



26th October 2020

Autumn 2020 Newsletter



IN THIS ISSUE:

- SOMERSET NATURE CONNECTIONS
- LET THERE BE LIGHT....
- INTRODUCTION TO COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT COURSE
- QUANTOCK QUIZ
- QUANTOCK LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME UPDATE
- BOOK CORNER
- WORD SEARCH

Somerset Nature Connections

Kristen Lambert

Somerset Nature Connections Project Manager

Somerset Nature Connections is a new three year partnership project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Somerset Wildlife Trust, Mendip Hills, Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills AONBs will support local communities and individuals most vulnerable to experiencing mental health issues, providing better access to nature spaces to help encourage and support connections that people can use as a tool to better manage their own wellbeing. The project will also develop a network of skilled volunteers to assist. The team will work closely with local mental health charities including Mind and Chard WATCH. Significant funding has also been received from Hinkley Point C Community Fund and Somerset County Council.

Somerset Nature Connections will run a targeted programme delivered in 6-week blocks at various locations across the county for people experiencing mental health issues. The programme will include practical outdoor activities, including conservation tasks, wildlife walks and natural crafts, adapted to the meet the specific needs of each group in order to help them connect with nature. Volunteers will be recruited and trained to provide peer support to those who may need extra help to attend activities and to access mainstream nature volunteer groups. The project will work with local community groups and support staff working with people at higher risk of experiencing mental health problems. This may include people with learning disabilities, long term health conditions, carers and isolated older people.

Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, which has seen a surge in the number of people turning to nature for their mental wellbeing, there was a glut of strong evidence that time spent outdoors helps improve people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. Jolyon Chesworth, Head of Engagement at Somerset Wildlife Trust says: "There are individuals and communities in Somerset who stand to benefit hugely from time spent in natural spaces, but access is often limited. It's vital that we support people and communities in need in these particularly challenging times, and that we do something positive and long term to empower particularly vulnerable people or groups to connect with the project so they don't feel isolated and alone, and can meet people in a safe, supported, nature-based environment to self-manage their mental health.'

Newly recruited Project Manager, Kristen Lambert says 'I am looking forward to recruiting my team over the next few months. Access to nature can be a powerful tool for helping people learn new skills, gain confidence, relax, communicate with others and be present – which can all help to manage and improve mental health and wellbeing.'



Let there be light....

Andy Stevenson
Quantock Hills Ranger

One of the many tasks our various volunteer groups tackle each year is hedgelaying. Over the last two winters members of the Quantock Conservation Volunteers (QCV) have laid a length of hedge along the Quantock Greenway and public bridleway east of Bicknoller. This followed a conversation with a local resident and the landowner on either side of the lane. The route had become dark and very damp due to the hedges on both banks growing so tall.



The volunteers with a range of hedgelaying experience worked in pairs to cut out dead or overhanging branches before laying the rest of the hedge. Some volunteers received advice and training from the Rangers during the days, whilst others had already attended training provided by the Somerset Hedge Group each winter; a few have gone on to compete in local competitions and even won prizes.



Hedgelaying is a traditional countryside skill for providing a stockproof boundary between fields, a technique used long before barbed wire fencing was invented. The laying of the hedge species, typically hazel, hawthorn and blackthorn, allows the stems to regrow and provide a thick barrier to keep grazing animals in or out. At the same time timber for firewood or hurdles is cut out. Each region and county has a specific style of hedgelaying depending on whether the hedge is on a bank and what materials are available. For more information locally visit www.somerset-hedgegroup.org.uk

The laid section certainly opens up the route and fortunately the landowner has laid the hedge on the opposite bank really letting the light in.

Get involved- Introduction to Countryside Management with Forestry England.

Our neighbouring Area of Outstanding Beauty, the Blackdown Hills AONB, is currently offering short, introductory sessions to practical countryside management and conservation working with Forestry England.

Ever wanted to learn more about woodland and countryside management or conservation? Keen to get outdoors and be a bit more active? Time for a career change? Join Forestry England and Blackdown Hills AONB for a taster session and to learn some new skills on the beautiful Blackdown Hills.

- 21st Oct
- 4th Nov & 18th Nov
- 2nd Dec & 16th Dec



The site will be a Forestry England site at the northern end of the Blackdown Hills and will be an accessible site, however you will need to make your own way there. There are no toilets onsite. These will be Covid secure sessions, following the 'rule of 6' so places are limited and booking is essential. All tools and work gloves will be provided.

For more information and to sign up check out the volunteering page of the Blackdowns AONB website <https://blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/>

Quantock Quiz – Photography

1) What type of butterfly is this?



2) Where is this?



3) This photo is taken from one of the best viewpoints in the Quantock Hills. Where is it?

4) (Same photo as 3) What breed of ponies are in the photo?



5) This elusive animal is sometimes seen before quickly disappearing into the heath.



6) Do you know where this historic boundary stone is?



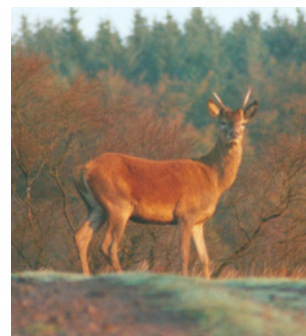
7) The home to the Quantock Hills AONB Service, but where is it?



8) Do you know the name of this historic beech tree clump?



9) You can sometimes see these across the Quantock Hills, usually at dawn or dusk but what is it?



10) This flower gives the Quantock heathland its distinctive purple colour in autumn but what is it?



(Answers on page 7)

The Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Update

Bill Jenman, Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager



We have finished recruiting the new team!



Vickie Sellick has joined us as Project Support Officer responsible for communications and finance – she works Monday through Thursday mornings. Vickie is originally from Cheshire, but has visited the Quantocks since childhood and relocated here with her family 5 years ago. Simon Phelps and Jonathon Barrett will be starting at the end of October as Natural Heritage Officer and Community Engagement and Volunteering Officer. Dan Broadbent will complete the team when he starts work in mid-November as Historic Heritage Officer.

Meantime the LPS had done quite a lot of felling work at Broomfield Common in response to ash dieback and the threat the dead and dying trees pose to the road there. In some parts there are quite a lot of tree and shrubs of other species remaining, but in the ash dominated areas it does look very bare. It would be fair to say that the work was not without controversy locally. Tree felling always has a drastic impact on the appearance of a wood, and while replanting with a wider variety of trees will enrich the woodland in the long term the site inevitably looks a mess for a year or two. However now the roadside ash felling has been done, and you can see into the interior of the wood, it's obvious how badly the remaining ash across the other 95% of the woodland has been affected. Together with some adjustments we made in response to the concerns raised there is now a strong supportive consensus that it had to be done, and we're looking forward with the Parish Council to the winter replanting programme. The LPS will also be supporting replanting in the recently felled roadside areas of Cothelstone Hill, where similar tree safety work has been commissioned by the AONB. Expect lots of opportunities for volunteers to get stuck into tree planting here over the next couple of years!



Book Corner

Kristen Lambert

Somerset Nature Connections Project Manager

For many, reading has been a way to switch off from the stresses of the last few months. I love books that are, in some way, related to Nature and Wellbeing and this topic has taken on extra significance during lockdown. Here are just a few recommendations.

Walking, One Step at a Time by Erling Kagge

Explorer Erling Kagge was the first in history to reach the ‘three poles’ (North, South and the summit of Everest). This book is about the love of exploration, the delight of discovery and the solace that can be found in walking. Kagge explains that for him it is one of the most important things we can do – no matter the pace, it allows us to slow down, see the world in a softer light and become really acquainted with our surroundings – noticing the weather, the shifting light, the ground beneath your feet.

Losing Eden, Why Our Minds Need the Wild by Lucy Jones

This is a beautifully written book, rooted in science, includes her personal story of how walking in nature supported her recovery from alcohol and drug dependency – ‘Nature picked me up by the scruff of my neck and I rested in her teeth for a while.’

There is a climate crisis subtext too, looking to a future where we can only experience nature connections virtually – “Why did nature end Granny?...We didn’t love it enough and we forgot it could give us peace.”

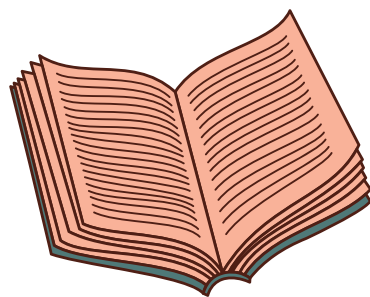
Jones also recognises inequalities in accessing nature and wildlife – stating, for example that women, low-income groups and BAME communities report more instances of feeling unsafe in public parks.

What has Nature Ever Done for Us? How Money Really Does Grow on Trees by Tony Jupiter

Environmental Campaigner and former director of Friends of the Earth, Tony Jupiter, brings together a collection of stories that clearly demonstrate that we take most of what nature does for granted. It takes the financial impact angle and encourages us to wake up and recognise that nature’s services are not free and limitless.

I was particularly interested in the chapter entitled ‘Natural Health Service’ which looks at the need for ‘health people to meet the nature people’. It considers the cost and impact of drug related treated for mental health issues (for example statins cost £9500 per year, while exercise-based activity costs just £440).

There are also chapters focusing on bees, use of pesticides and the importance of earth’s oceans with incredible research and statistics to back up the need for us all to change the way we think about nature and economy.



Word Search

U B H O M W A O N Z R D J D O Y U P
 A N O I R R X P C S F A C O R N C L
 X N A N B Y A G P T T U R B R O H Y
 P V R U F E C I K L O A G K S V E T
 U X T F T I R O N R E B G U Q E S T
 D J X X T U R N N C H P E W U M T D
 D U H S U K M E A K O F P R I B N X
 L Z Q L G R Y N Q T E A H G R E U R
 E H A L L O W E E N I R T N R R T V
 S C U K M I S T P D U O S O E W S U
 G P U M P K I N X N U H N T L G P K
 U L E A V E S H A R V E S T E O R I



ACORN
 APPLE
 AUTUMN
 BONFIRE
 CHESTNUT
 CONKERS
 HALLOWEEN

HARVEST
 HIBERNATION
 LEAVES
 MIST
 NOVEMBER
 OCTOBER
 PUDDLES

PUMPKIN
 RAINCOAT
 SQUIRREL
 STAG



Quiz Answers from page 4

1. Green hairstreak
2. Kille Beach or beach at East Quantoxhead
3. Cothelstone Hill
4. Exmoor Pomes
5. Adder
6. Triscombe or Triscombe Stone
7. Fyne Court
8. Seven Sisters
9. Red Deer
10. Bell Heather



www.quantockhills.com



facebook.com/quantock.hills



twitter.com/Quantockhills



instagram.com/quantockhills



quantockhills@somerset.gov.uk



www.youtube.com/quantockhillsaonb

