

Giving nature a home in Sussex

Update for the Sussex Ornithological Society, April 2020

Following the continued generous support of the Sussex Ornithological Society (SOS), we are delighted to provide the below update on our projects. We were hoping this update could be shared at the SOS AGM in April but given current circumstances we hope it can be shared electronically with the committee instead.

New rotovator at Pulborough Brooks

A brief update on the new rotovator that support from SOS allowed us to purchase last year. The staff and volunteers found their new piece of kit to be essential to their winter work programme. To date, the rotovator has been most beneficial for our wetland birds, through the creation of muddy edges within our in-field features and around our pools, to act as a food source for chicks. It will also be essential for the creation of new wetland features that we hope will take place as part of our wetland enhancement project (see update below) at Pulborough later this year.



There has been a step change in our ability to manage and create wetland features at Pulborough since the new rotovator has been on-site.



The creation of muddy edged areas like this allow waders, particularly newly hatched chicks, to find invertebrate food more easily, and helps to protect eggs and fledglings from predation by foxes and badgers.

Biodiversity Boost for Pulborough Brooks

Plans to improve Pulborough's wet grassland habitats are moving ahead. We have applied to Biffa Award, a landfill funder, and we recently learned that our 'Expression of Interest' has been approved and we have been invited to submit a full application for their May meeting. The pledged £10,000 from SOS towards this project will definitely help to strengthen our application to secure the remaining project costs. If funding is approved, we would hope to start work in August this year, including the installation of anti-predator fencing, significant wetland enhancement and biological control of non-native species.



We will ensure we keep SOS updated on the progress of our landfill application for the enhancement of wetland habitats at Pulborough Brooks.

Boosting Sussex's woodland biodiversity

We have so far managed to install one section of deer fencing at Rowlands Wood, and two sections at Broadwater Warren. The plan for this year was to fence two sections at Rowlands and four at Broadwater so we are currently half-way to our target at each reserve.

The remaining areas have been prepared and marked out, but due to current restrictions about working in teams we won't be able to install the remaining fencing until social distancing measures have been relaxed. We are ready to go though as soon as we can, and to complete the work we will only need one full day at each reserve. We will prioritise getting the fencing up this growing season – even if we have to wait a couple of months the vegetation will still benefit significantly from being protected from deer.



Before (top) and after (bottom) photos of one of the fencing sections at Broadwater Warren. We have left some brash in the middle of this section to see if it 'brambles up' and adds structure to the woodland understorey.

Saving turtle doves in Sussex

As previously reported, there was a slight underspend on the funding that SOS provided for our work to save turtle doves in Sussex. Our Turtle Dove Conservation Advisor, Caroline French, has put this funding to good use and purchased another 10 camera traps for use across our partner sites – helping us to capture images of turtle doves where supplementary feeding is being carried out. In addition, the funding has helped Caroline to hire a small van to distribute seed mix to farmers.

The current restrictions put in place due to COVID-19 are, unfortunately, going to impact our turtle dove work this year. We weren't able to get the new cameras out to farmers in time but thankfully we have distributed all the seed mix so at least farmers can keep providing this to returning birds. We won't be able to make visits to partner farms but will instead be relying on any monitoring data that farmers themselves can provide, and will be out to make visits as soon as restrictions are lifted. Meanwhile the cameras are safe in storage and will be put to good use in the 2021 breeding season.



The COVID-19 situation is going to impact our ability to work with farmers in Sussex, but we will ensure we do all we can whilst working within the advice provided by government.

Thank you very much for your continued support



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