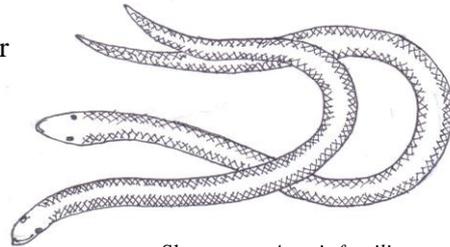


Why are slow worms slow?

The slow worm is not a worm or a snake but a rather charming legless lizard. They can grow up to about 60 cm (2 feet) in length and have a triangular shaped head, no evident neck and a long tapering body about 60% of which is tail. The male is generally any colour from grey-gold to copper coloured. The female is generally of a similar colour to the male but has, additionally, a darker spinal stripe running from the back of the head to the tip of the tail. Both sexes have black flank stripes from the mouth to the tip of the tail and a pale bluish marbled colouring to the underside.

They range across most of mainland UK and on larger islands from Skye, to Wight, and Jersey. They live in long grass or heath-land and eat worms and slugs. It is probable that they spend much of their time underground and hunt above ground at night when their prey is more active. However they may be seen early in the morning sunbathing on logs and other warming materials. They hibernate from October to March and mate in the spring. Young are born live (not in eggs) in autumn and are generally more silvery than the adults with markings like the adult female.



Slow worm *Anguis fragilis*

The difference between slow worms and snakes is that slow worms can blink and like other reptiles with legs they can shed their tails to escape predators and re-grow them again later.

Though slow worms are non poisonous do not try to pick it up if you see one as this may induce it to shed its tail rendering this defence mechanism useless in the event it encounters a real predator such as a kestrel or cat.

Slow worms are not particularly slow moving and I have not been able to find any reference as to where the name comes from. I suspect it is an ancient reference to the way they, when disturbed, will stay still for a while before nonchalantly gliding away. By contrast most snakes will move immediately or will rise slightly as if to strike.

The environmentalist who is working for Rydon Homes commenced delivering slow worms to the Orchard Meadow on Thursday July 30th. When I spoke to the gentleman on 5th August he said they were averaging ten per day so far. The process of transfer will continue until the slow worm hibernation season starts.

The only negative thing I have to say is that dog walkers seem to be taking more of an interest in the wood. There are at least four animals being introduced from the evidence of poo being left behind, and the two owners I have had the opportunity to address have both expressed a right to walking their dogs in Foal Hurst and that it doesn't matter as we are soon to have 1000 additional

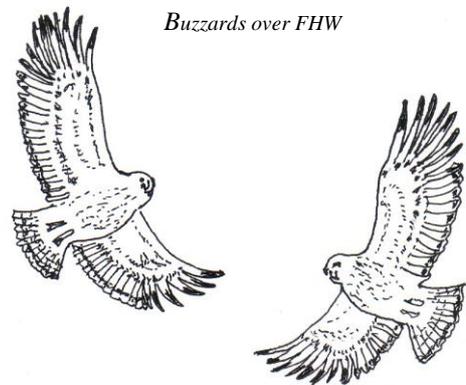
FHW NEWS *letter*

homes in the area! Such arrogance, and lack of consideration and respect are hard to counter. All I can say is that if on your wanderings you happen across a dog walker in the wood please draw their attention to the notices on the gates. I am bringing this matter to the attention of the council.

The wetland and other ponds have all had their fair share of activity. All the ponds had frog spawn and tadpoles but only the pond at the rookery actually produced little frogs. In the wetland the tadpoles were eaten by the numerous diving beetle, damselfly and dragonfly larvae. I have even got a fuzzy picture of a tadpole being eaten! I do not know what happened to the tadpoles in the new ponds in the orchard field but they all disappeared quite quickly after hatching, and there have been the same predatory culprits as in the wetland. However, this is good because despite the demise of so many potential frogs it means the ponds are all healthy. There is a natural food chain with insect predators feeding at the top, including a water spider in the small orchard field pond. The rookery pond does not have the dragonfly and diving beetles so the food chain is not so well established but the bottom of that pond was lined with several inches of leaf litter which presented a good hiding place for the tadpoles until they left the water. Once the frogs had left, the leaf litter quickly became stagnant and only suitable for mosquitoes. In August we (Mark, Ray and I) removed the leaf litter ready for use as mulch on the improved section of muddy way.

There was a suspected problem of leaks in the new ponds in the orchard field but after filling them to near capacity in the summer it now appears they were only settling down. They have both retained their water levels except for expected evaporation.

The birds and the beasties have all shown an interest in the wood and I have seen evidence or heard robins, blue tits, great tits, long tail tits, wrens, stone chats, chiffchaffs, blackbirds, tree creepers, black caps, jays, magpies, jackdaws, tawny owls, cuckoo, wood pigeon, pheasant, buzzards, kestrels and a red kite flew over on several occasions during the summer. This is the second year that I have seen mandarin ducks on the wetland though they flew away quickly when they saw me. Nevertheless, they were there on several occasions this year whereas I only saw them once in 2014. I think I may also have seen a wax wing as it flew away but I am not sure on that one. The tawny owls have produced young again this year and I saw the infant on the 12th August and heard it again on the 17th.



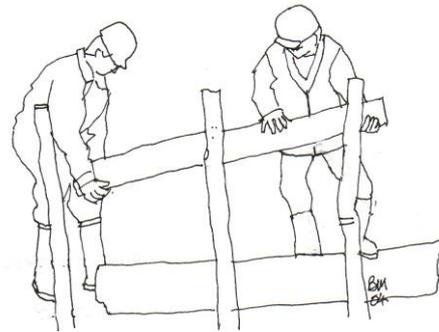
The fox has been about and so have the squirrels and the rabbits but the deer have shown a good interest in the wetland during May and June, appearing to come down to drink on a regular basis. I have also heard the deer giving a warning cough when I have been working. The sound is a single note a bit like someone expelling air to clear their throat.

I hope you have all had a wonderful summer and I look forward to seeing you on our first activity day of the season on the 27th September.

Peter Prince

Wildlife Activity Days 2015 -16

Now is time to plan the coming season's wildlife activity days and so below is a list of planned activities. There is a concentration on the management of our well- established hedgerows and rides this autumn, with coppicing over the winter and a spring time boost for the new Orchard Meadow.

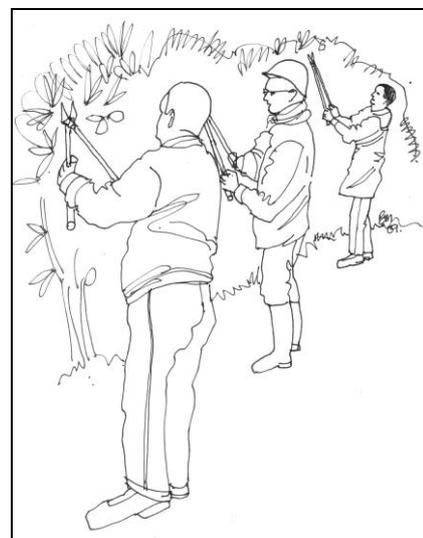


Date	Planned activity	Exercise involved
27 September 2015	<i>Cutting back the vegetation in leaning oak ride</i>	Sawing and stacking timber plus building dead hedges
25 October (clocks go back).	<i>Cutting back the vegetation in leaning oak ride</i>	Sawing and stacking timber plus building dead hedges.
29 November	<i>Dormice Habitat Improvement in the north west corner of the wood.</i>	Sawing and stacking timber plus building dead hedges.
27 December	<i>Dormice Habitat Improvement in the north west corner of the wood.</i>	Sawing and stacking timber plus building dead hedges.
31 January 2016	<i>Hedge trimming & bramble bashing near the allotment boundary.</i>	Lopping, sawing & raking. .
28 February	<i>Orchard Meadow Projects: Building 2 or 3 stag beetle pyramids.</i>	Digging, moving logs, wiring skills.
27 March (Clocks go forward).	<i>Orchard Meadow Projects : Stag beetle pyramid or bench building.</i>	As required.

As always the activities might have to change depending upon weather conditions, but this is the plan we will be working on.

On each activity day meet in the Foal Hurst Wood car park by 9.30 am. Mid-morning tea break at around 11.00 am with the morning session ending around 12.30 pm.

For anyone who wishes to stay on, afternoon sessions begin after lunch and finish around 3.00 – 3.30 pm.



Why not become a 'wildlife spotter' at Foal Hurst Wood

We plan to start a brand new project, starting from 1st January 2016, to collect many more wildlife sightings from Foal Hurst Wood. This will add to our knowledge of species found at Foal Hurst Wood and also help guide the current and future management plans for the nature reserve. To do this we need your help in recording any wildlife you spot within the nature reserve. This is within both the wooded and grassland areas of the whole area covered by Foal Hurst Wood nature reserve.

How can you help ?

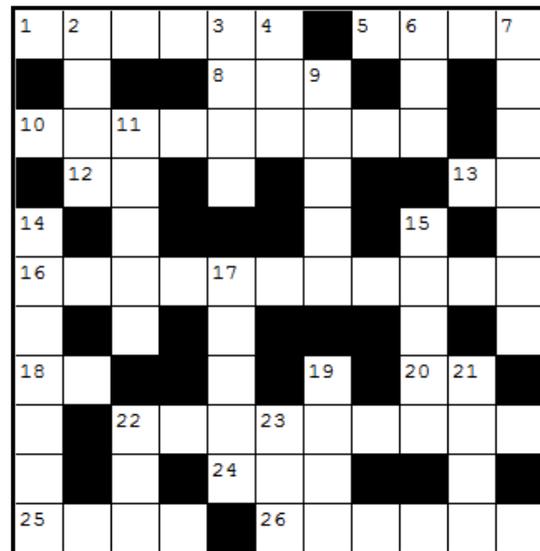
In the first instance please contact our biological recorder, Steve Songhurst on email dormouse6644@gmail.com and let him know that you are interested in joining the 'wildlife spotters team' for the reserve and the level of species identification skills you have e.g. beginner, moderate or advanced and any areas of recording interest you might have e.g. birds, insects, plants, fungi. We would stress that you don't need to be an expert to become a wildlife spotter and this is a great way to improve your identification skills in an area which interests you.

Steve Songhurst

FHW Crossword No 112

Clues Across 1. Similar to an Owl, (6). 5. Slightly open, (4). 8. Meadow, (3). 10. Darter or Hawker, (9). 12. Metric measure (abbr), (2). 13. Correct, (2). 16. Notable outcome, (11). 18. Latrine, (1.1). 20. Call Home! (1.1). 22. Rate of transfer of 3,2 down to Orchard Field, (3.3.3). 24. Golfing term, (3). 25. Please close behind you. (4). 26. Type of farming, (6).

Clues Down 2. See 3. 3,2. *Anguis fragilis*, (4,4). 4. Female bird, (3). 6. Colourful avian resident of FHW, (3). 7. Seen over FHW this summer, (3,4). 9. In flames, (5). 11. Greek letter, (5). 14. Possible sighting in FHW, (3,4). 15. Axed, (5). 17. Happening (5). 19. Wetland drinker,(4). 21. 3,2's detachable appendage, (4). 22. Small bird, (3). 23 Small round veg, (3).



Solutions to FHW Crossword No 111

Across 1. Frog. 5. Apple .6. Axe. 7. OK. 9. Wren. 10. Champion. 14. Mandarin. 17. Flea. 18. St. 19. Ebb. 21. Bract. 22. Hive.

Down 1. Fox. 2. Group. 3. Spawn. 4. Alder. 6. Arc. 7. Elan. 11. Inn. 12. Tree. 13. Flora. 14. March. 15. Ditch. 16. Nub. 20. Bee.

Any News?

Items for the October Issue by 5th October please, to:-
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Kent, TN12 6JX

email b.mace452@btinternet.com