



Chichester Harbour Conservancy

Welcome to Harbour CHIRP
Chichester Harbour, Information from a Remarkable Place

Welcome and introduction



of early spring?

Welcome to February's edition of Harbour CHIRP

At this time or year, it's easy to think that the winter will go on forever but the days are starting to lengthen now and the sunset is noticeably later in the afternoon. There has even been a little sunshine in amongst the rainy days of January. Signs of the coming spring are starting to appear, bulbs are pushing their way up through the earth and the first catkins are visible in the hedgerows. Why not take the opportunity of any break in the weather to get out and spot some signs

National news



The NAAONB welcomes launch of Defra 25-year Environmental Plan

The long-awaited Defra 25-year environmental plan was launched in January. The plan is the culmination of over 2 years of close work and consultation with environmental bodies, including the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB).

It provides an opportunity for AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards to work collaboratively with Government to conserve and enhance our outstanding landscapes.

Designating a landscape as an AONB aims to improve the connection between people and nature. In managing Chichester Harbour, we work in partnership with others to protect and enhance this wonderful environment for people to enjoy both now and in the future.

Image courtesy of Paul Adams

Local news



Volunteers working on Thorney Island

The Rangers, in conjunction with Chichester and District Archaeological Society (CDAS) and a force of volunteers from SSE worked on clearing vegetation from WWII pillboxes on Thorney Island last week. There are a number around the Harbour and they can become overgrown so the sites need to be maintained as part of our rich history.

Image courtesy of CDAS

Beauty Betrayed



Richard Austin – AONB Manager

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) recently published an independent report that examined the number of approved planning applications for 10 houses or more across England's 34 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which includes Chichester Harbour. 'Beauty Betrayed: How Reckless Housing Development Threatens England's AONBs' reveals an "insidious threat to these

treasured landscapes" since they are increasingly subject to major housing applications, with a leap in the number of units approved and the amount of land lost.

The report said that our National Parks are better protected from housing, even though in planning law they are supposed to be of equal value to the AONBs. The findings of this report are a concern. The impact of housing developments in other AONBs must serve as a warning to us. In particular, we must protect the setting of Chichester Harbour along its boundary otherwise it will gradually erode the overall character our protected landscape.

The area of land approved for housing along the boundaries of the AONBs increased nine-times between 2012-13 and 2016-17. Nearly 12,000 new houses were permitted at fringe sites, across 566 hectares of land, of which over half was on greenfield sites.

Here in Chichester Harbour, the Conservancy commented on 280 planning applications last year, mostly in Chichester District, with an accordance rate of 90%, where the recommendation from the Conservancy was upheld by the Local Planning Authority. Whilst we do appreciate the ongoing support of Chichester District Council, all new applications for major development in and around the AONB must heed the advice of the CPRE report. In years to come, it would be a tremendous shame if Chichester Harbour was used as a case study to show the detrimental impact that housing can have on the landscape.

Image courtesy of Paul Adams

Tough time for birds



Pete Hughes – Ecologist

Late winter is a hard time for many of the Harbour's birds – food supplies are running low, spring temperatures have not started to bring new life, and there are not many daylight hours available for feeding.

Bad weather can compound the pressure that the birds face. Roost sites for waders and wildfowl can be awash during storms and big tides, and this also saps the energy

of birds that usually roost on the water.

In early January we experienced one of the highest tides of recent years, as a big storm battered the south coast, coinciding with the first spring tides of the year. Perhaps not surprisingly, a couple of

days later I discovered a dead Great Northern Diver on the shore of the Harbour. This species is the epitome of hardy; a real take-whatever-the-weather-can-throw-at-me sort of bird. They winter at sea and breed in the far north, so they see a fair amount of rough weather. It was a bird in its first winter, and it is possible it became exhausted during the storm and was unable to feed.

It was sad to see, but remarkable to examine up close. A huge bill adapted to catching crabs and fish lined with teeth-like grips and long narrow, stream-lined legs with broad 'oar' feet on the end. A sure reminder that even with the right tools, birds can succumb during the worst of the weather

Walking in Winter



Judi Darley – Communities Officer

There is a positive about the wet and windy weather we have been experiencing of late – and that's the chance to be out in the Harbour area and the fresh air on one's own without seeing anyone else for some time. Even the well walked route around East Head has been noticeably quieter

these past few weeks!

It has been rewarding to see far more Sanderling scurrying out at the water's edge. These silvery, bright eyed, energetic birds would be found on the sandy shoreline in greater numbers if we could endeavour to disturb them less.

One evening at dusk last autumn, I walked around East Head with a friend. We stood quietly at the edge of the sand dunes and noticed Sanderling gradually flying in to land on the shoreline, firstly in small numbers, one or two, and then bigger groups, until there was a sizeable group of 100 or more. They were gathering up presumably for protection in a large group from predators over night. How lovely it would be to see such a large group on the shoreline during the day!

The Harbour Creebies and Hares' walks have continued throughout the winter despite the rain. I was delighted to hear that Jan Andrew took a photo on the Harbour Creebies walk in Emsworth (seen here) that went on to win all the categories in her camera club. Well done Jan!

image courtesy of Jan Andrews

Engaging with young people



Jane Latawski – Education Officer

Every year the Conservancy hosts two work experience students from local secondary schools and this February, Maddie and Rosie from Bishop Luffa School, will be joining us for a week. We've put together a varied, and we hope engaging programme, to help them understand the Conservancy's AONB and Harbour Authority responsibilities.

This month, we are also supporting higher education students in their studies. Bea from Sparsholt College, a Conservation Management student, is working with our Rangers Georgie and Keith, while Melissa, from the University's Fine Art degree, will be completing a module of work based on the Harbour's landscapes.

This kind of work - to support young people and engage with the wider community, is important to the Conservancy as it can have the benefit of bringing fresh ideas and approaches to our organisation.

Sadly, we only have limited spaces for work experience or placements each year, but please contact Jane Latawski for more information about we can offer in future years.

Charlotte McCarthy, from the University of Chichester, spent three months working in the Harbour in 2017, she produced the art work pictured with Birdham Primary pupils.

Please report any interesting sightings to the Harbour Office, particularly of breeding birds and water voles.

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Harbour Office

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