

Harbour *Life*

Winter 2022

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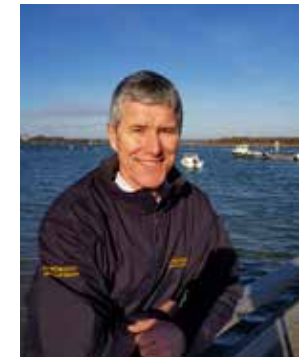
Welcome

Winter is the natural time for reflecting on the events of the year and in this edition of Harbour Life we look back on two significant initiatives centred around Chichester Harbour. You can read about the progress made in the project aimed at boosting the breeding success of Terns and also the advances made in the understanding of the effects of endocrine disrupting chemicals in the water.

This season is also a time for preparation. The overwintering birds use the winter months to prepare for the breeding season, using the rich food sources in the Harbour to build up their resources for the spring. There is much we can do to prepare for the year ahead also, and Ed Carter, our Senior Deputy Harbour Master, gives some sound and comprehensive advice for boaters in his winter maintenance guide.

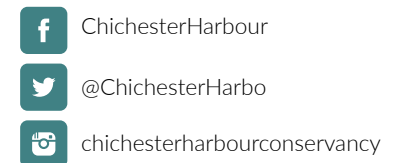
I hope you enjoy this edition.

Richard Craven
Director and Harbour Master



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We'd love to hear your stories about what you love about Chichester Harbour, and how you use it. Share your thoughts and photos on our social media channels or contact us at the Harbour Office.

Cover photo © Shirley Rushmer

News *in brief*

Championing Research

In October we welcomed more than 80 attendees to a symposium at Chichester Yacht Club to share work undertaken by RedPol, the Anglo-French partnership research project which is studying the effect that endocrine disruptors – hormone changing chemicals in the environment – are having on marine and human health.

The event brought together a range of specialists who shared recent research about the impact of endocrine disruptors in the English Channel, including Chichester Harbour. The Harbour is an important area for scientific research, acting as a microcosm for how these chemicals are affecting the environment at large.

Attendees included experts from the University of Brighton, University of Portsmouth, TOXEM, Université Caen Normandie and Université Le Havre Normandie, which leads the RedPol project.

The symposium reported on the project findings so far, with key speakers exploring the issues identified, shortfalls in knowledge and possible solutions.

Chichester Harbour is a highly designated and highly protected area of the South



Restoring the Solent's most imperilled marine habitat

Chichester Harbour Conservancy is delighted to be in partnership with ten other influential organisations working in the Solent region who have successfully secured a \$5m grant to undertake a five-year project to restore some of the Solent's most imperilled marine habitats.

The money, granted by the Endangered Landscapes Programme, will be used to restore seagrass meadows, oyster reefs, saltmarsh and seabird nesting habitat across the region as part of the Solent Seascape Project.

In addition to physically restoring areas of these four key habitat types, the Solent Seascape Project will work with landowners and regulators to improve the protection and management of existing Solent habitats, to monitor the benefits of seascape scale restoration scientifically and to ensure that local people and sea-users co-design the project, thereby becoming more connected and engaged with their own marine environment.

Our involvement will be coordinated through the Chichester Harbour Protection and Recovery of Nature (CHaPRoN) partnership and you can keep up to date with developments on the dedicated CHaPRoN website - www.chapron.org.uk.

Coast so it was important for us to bring the RedPol project partners together here to review the project findings and share the collective information we've gathered more extensively.

The RedPol project runs from April 2020 to June 2023. The symposium was funded by Interreg and concluded with attendees invited to view Chichester Harbour from the water on the Conservancy's solar boat, Solar Heritage.



Please don't handle or pick up any sick or dead birds, and keep dogs away from them too. Report any sightings to birdreport@conservancy.co.uk

Bird Flu in Fishbourne

During October 2022 we began to receive reports of dead or sick Mute Swans at the north end of the Fishbourne Channel between Dell Quay and Fishbourne Meadows.

After conversations with a number of organisations, including West Sussex County Council and Chichester District Council, it was agreed that we'd remove the dead swans and have them safely disposed of. Sadly, at least 30 Mute Swans have now known to have died in the locality.

Avian flu has been recorded in a wide range of bird species in the UK in recent months, including many species of waterfowl, pigeons, songbirds and birds of prey. After reporting the dead Swans to DEFRA, two birds were collected for analysis and we later received confirmation that both tested positive for HPAI.

Over the last five years, the Mute Swan flock in the Fishbourne channel has numbered between 120-140 birds, so the loss of at

least 30 is significant, representing about 20% mortality so far. Mute Swans have been particularly susceptible, and although we don't know why, we're hoping it doesn't spread into other waterfowl species.

Sadly, evidence from elsewhere in the UK suggests this might not be the case; in the autumn of 2021 bird flu is thought to have killed many thousands of Barnacle Geese in the Solway Firth in SW Scotland. Estimates of the mortality have varied between 10% and 30% of the entire population. Barnacle Geese are similar in many ways to the Brent Geese that winter in large numbers on the Solent, so we are currently monitoring Brent Geese in Chichester Harbour for signs of sickness or high mortality.

Sir Jeremy Thomas KCMG

In late September we heard the sad news that Sir Jeremy Thomas had died.. Sir Jeremy was an instrumental figure in the Conservancy's history and a lifelong champion of Chichester Harbour. Born in 1931 he grew up messing about in boats, sailing, fishing and capsizing in Chichester Harbour. The first boat he owned, in 1945, was a twelve-foot dinghy, and at Oxford, he captained the first British University Sailing Team to visit the United States, racing against American colleges.



Sir Jeremy travelled round the world in HM Diplomatic Service between 1954 and 1989, sailing with the family wherever he could: on the South China Sea, the Adriatic, Long Island Sound and, during his last posting as Ambassador to Athens, among the islands of the Aegean. After retiring he returned to the area and was heavily involved in helping to manage Chichester Harbour Conservancy, serving on the Advisory Committee, and acting as Chairman from 1993 to 1997. He was pivotal to setting up the Chichester Harbour Trust in 2002 and was its first chairman. Sir Jeremy was also the author of *The Rhythm of the Tide: Tales through the ages of Chichester Harbour* which was published in 1999, and formed the inspiration for our own Heritage Lottery Fund bid: our suite of projects became known as *Rhythms of the Tide*.

Planning for the Future

Photo © Paul Adams

Chichester Harbour is a nationally important landscape, with habitats and wildlife of international importance. Our duty is to conserve and enhance the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for the benefit of future generations. Part of this work involves our consultative role in planning decisions. The planning system helps make sure that all developments are appropriate to the character and setting of this protected landscape.

What role does the Conservancy have in planning decisions?

The Conservancy's Planning Officers and Planning Committee are called on to consider around 330 applications that affect the AONB every year. In addition, they're involved in commenting on applications that have a direct impact on the AONB even if they are not within the boundary, usually because they involve applications for large developments close

to it. The nature of these developments often means they are subject to Public Inquiry or appeals, and each stage of these procedures requires additional preparatory work for us to comment effectively. At present the team are working on an application for 200 dwellings on land between Broad Road and Drift Lane on the Hambrook/Chidham border which is awaiting a Public Inquiry in January, and an application for 300 dwellings at Highgrove

Farm in Bosham which is currently being considered by the Planning Authority.

In addition, they regularly respond to consultations on local strategies, most recently the revised Southbourne Neighbourhood Plan, the Hayling Island Coastal Management Strategy and the Havant Borough Local Plan. The Chichester District Local Plan will hopefully be available for comments in 2023.

What guides any responses?

All responses are based on the development plan policies for either Havant Borough Council or Chichester District Council, the Chichester Harbour AONB

Management Plan and other planning guidance. Take a look at our Quick Guide for further detail on the process we use on our [website](#).

What are the Planning Principles?

We've developed 19 Planning Principles (available online) to help guide how the Conservancy is likely to respond to any planning application. We encourage local people, parish councils and residents' associations, to use these Planning Principles to help inform their thinking. The Planning Principles expand on the policies used by the Local Planning Authorities and help promote and reinforce local distinctiveness in the AONB. They aim to help anyone seeking planning permission to gain a clear understanding of what's possible and permitted. Ultimately they have been put in place to explain adopted statutory land use policies relating to any development in the AONB.

What should I do if I'm planning a development or change to my property?

We're happy to provide any pre-application planning advice for any proposed developments within and next to the AONB. Please get in touch with the team at the Harbour Office to discuss your plans.



Return of the Terns

UPDATE



Time for the Terns

Ensuring that the right conditions are in place is a critical step in supporting nature recovery. Our Return of the Tern project, in partnership with the Friends of Chichester Harbour, took an important step this autumn with the arrival of shingle onto one of the tern's key nesting sites. Jess Vagg, Project Manager of Return of the Tern, shares an update.

Return of the Tern is a partnership nature recovery initiative between the Friends of Chichester Harbour and Chichester Harbour Conservancy, delivering a series of projects that will boost the population of Little Terns and Common Terns in Chichester Harbour. The focus on terns comes following last year's report by Natural England which found that Chichester Harbour was in "unfavourable declining" condition and identified that terns were in long term decline.



Earlier in the autumn a scheme to recharge the shingle on Stakes Island was completed with 500 tonnes of material added to raise the bank to one metre above the current high spring tide height. The recharge aims to help boost tern breeding in Chichester Harbour by creating more favourable habitat conditions.

Stakes Island is a man-made ridge of mud and shingle located south of the Chidham Peninsula. The area currently supports a small number of nesting attempts from Common Terns, Little Terns, Black Headed Gulls, Ringed Plovers and Oystercatchers. These attempts have failed each year due to flooding by a spring tide. The work to recharge the shingle involved increasing the height of the bank to improve the site as a naturally occurring nesting habitat. It also improved Stakes Island as a high tide roost for wintering wader bird species.

It was essential that this work took place in one of the two short windows in spring or autumn to minimise disruption to the summer and wintering birds in the

Harbour. We'll now be keeping a close eye on Stakes Island to see how the shingle migrates and the impact it has on nesting terns and other birdlife. It's likely that we'll need to top it up in the next 5-10 years as a result of sea level rise and more extreme weather predictions.

The project was funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, the UK Government's £40 million fund to help the nation build back greener from the pandemic, and took place in October 2022, with Walcon Marine managing the works. Half of the shingle was brought in by barge from Southampton with the remaining portion delivered to Itchenor by road, and then taken out by barge to Stakes Island.

Follow updates:

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A guide to winter and pre-season vessel maintenance



Ed Carter,
Senior Deputy Harbour Master

During the season, our Patrol team are always out and about on the water, ready and waiting to give guidance, information and help mariners in distress. While the incidents we attend vary widely, a large proportion inevitably involves towing vessels to a point of safety.

During 2022, our team conducted 47 towages and over 80% of these were down to mechanical failure. As we move into the winter, we're already starting to think fondly of the return to warmer weather and the start of next season! And now is the time to conduct some vital yet basic maintenance that will not only have your vessel ready to go but will most likely go a long way to getting you home safely, without our help!



Safety first

Life saving apparatus should be the first thing on the check list. Are the life jackets in good condition? Look online for places to get them serviced. Are the flares in date and dry? Most Chandlers will take old flares for no charge if you are buying new ones. If you have a DanBuoy or life rings, are they in good condition and are easy to access? If you have a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon), it should have instructions on how to test the unit. Give it a go, and make sure it is registered.

Safety apparatus often goes unnoticed, until it is needed, often in a big hurry. Keeping an eye on these items could really make a difference...when you really need it!

Get the rubber gloves on



Give your vessel a good clean, inside, and out. Cleaning a vessel will help to protect it through the winter and make it easier to get ready again when the weather improves.

There are many eco-friendly products available, and cleaning the salt and dirt from windows, sprayhoods, canvas, ropes, lifejackets, and other safety devices, will prolong their life. You may spot things that you did not know need repairing. Make sure you allow everything to dry properly before storing.

You've got it covered

The winter winds will take advantage of any loose material. Ensure that sail bags are well secured, do the zips up tight, and replace any old and loose elastic ties. It is best to drop and store foresails. If you can't, make sure that they are securely furled, and all lines are secured tightly to prevent flogging.

Bimini covers are especially vulnerable, take them off and store them, or drop and tie them down if you can't. Bimini covers and loose sails all cause extra drag in high winds. If on a swinging mooring, this can cause a vessel to sit very differently to its neighbours and increase the chances of collision.

In severe cases, the extra load can cause moorings to fail or drag.

It's what's inside that counts



All vessels suffer a bit with damp, especially when they are not used for long periods. There are always fine and sunny days during the winter where you can give things a good airing. Seat covers and cushions are often easy to take ashore and store, and it also makes it easier to clean away any damp and mould. Bits and pieces can be stored in snap-lock containers, which will give them extra protection. Electronics and salt water don't make good bedfellows. GPS Systems, VHF radios, torches and so on will all benefit from a few months in the warm and dry.

Be 'Gas Safe'

Many of us take steps in our homes to stay safe from carbon monoxide by installing CO alarms and having an annual boiler service. The same should apply when out on the water. The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) has investigated six incidents in the past 12 years following the needless loss of 10 lives due to carbon monoxide poisoning. All of these happened on board recreational motor cruisers or small fishing vessels. MAIB Chief Inspector Captain Andrew Moll OBE has this critical advice for boat users:

"Engines and equipment used on board, such as cookers, grills and cabin heaters, can give off carbon monoxide if not properly maintained. Regular servicing should be undertaken by someone competent to carry out the task, for example a marine engineer or a qualified heating installer. All installations and modifications to equipment should be fit for purpose and carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.

With winter upon us and fuel prices still high, boat users may be tempted to keep doors and windows closed to stay warm and reduce drafts. However, carbon monoxide can build up when engines idle in enclosed areas, such as against quay walls, next to other boats or inside locks. Adequate ventilation is an important way of protecting against the potential accumulation of poisonous fumes in cabins.

Carbon monoxide alarms are readily available, inexpensive and easy to install. This potentially lifesaving equipment will alert the boat user to the presence of this odourless, colourless poisonous gas so that action can be taken.

At this time of year, as weather begins to get cooler, there is a temptation for those on the water to keep doors, hatches and windows closed to reduce drafts, use cookers and grills more to prepare hot food, and turn on cabin heaters. Understanding the potential risks of carbon monoxide and taking these three important steps – servicing equipment, fitting a CO alarm and ventilating the cabin – will help protect against this odourless, colourless poisonous gas."



Brave the weather

It is all too easy to keep postponing a visit to a moored vessel during the winter. Even on sunny days, the prospect of getting wrapped up against the cold is not always enticing.

However, getting down to visit a moored vessel regularly over the winter period is by far the best thing to do. Opening the hatches on a dry sunny day, running the engine for a while and enjoying a cup of tea in the sun surrounded by a quiet harbour is all part of the wider enjoyment of boating. At Itchenor, the ferry runs every weekend from 10am to 4pm (except between Christmas and New Year) which means you won't even need to pump up the tender!



Mechanically minded

If sails are not your chosen form of primary propulsion, then there are several easy things you can do to keep things in top condition:



Check the propellor. Look for dents or bends, these can cause excessive vibration which can lead to further complications. Get a professional opinion if you are uncertain, it may need repairing or replacing.

Check the fuel system. Have a look for worn or corroded pipes and clamps on fuel lines. If you see any sign of leakage, have a mechanic check and repair things before using them again.

Flush the cooling system. Use fresh water to flush the engine, most modern outboard engines have a place you can attach a hose pipe. Run the engine at idle to clear out salt and sand.

If you know how, change the oil. Leaving old oil in an engine over the winter can damage the engine and clog things up. Run the engine for a few minutes before changing the oil and filter. Make sure you don't spill any! Always use a container with sufficient space to take the waste oil and dispose of the old oil and any soiled rags responsibly. Most local recycling centres can accept old oil. Check beforehand

however for their rules, and potential charges.

Check for bilge rats

Most vessels take on a bit of water. Whether from salt spray or rain, something always finds its way to the bilge.

Keeping the bilge clean and dry will not only keep away unsightly smells but makes it very easy to identify if you do develop a leak.

Check the bilge pump (and float switch if fitted). If it is an automatic pump, make sure it has a reliable power source.

If you do develop a leak, or if rain is getting in, batteries can run down fast. Fitting a small solar panel can really help to keep a battery topped up and give you further peace of mind.

The bitter end

Don't forget to check the anchor; they will last a long time if looked after well.



Check for corrosion and rust and check the chain and/or rope for corrosion and fraying. Not only is the anchor a must-have for a lunch stop, but it's also a vital piece of safety equipment - it should be easy and quick to deploy in an emergency. Check the 'bitter end' too; the anchor should always be secured to the vessel at the end of the rope or chain. It'll be red faces all round if you have to admit you threw the anchor overboard!

A winter walk

North Common, Hayling Island



Maria Court, Shared Services Manager

This is an easier access stroll with splendid views to Emsworth and the South Downs as a backdrop in the distance, perfect for the winter months as the shorter route is rarely muddy and provides a wonderful opportunity for bird watching.

After parking in the small, free car park along Northney Road it's straight out onto the wheelchair friendly path towards the shoreline. There is a kissing gate here, but it has a RADAR padlock to allow access for keyholders. After a short distance the path opens out to views towards Northney Marina with the sound of halyard against mast ringing on a windy day.

The path then follows the shoreline between the fields and an expanse of saltmarsh which hosts many of our winter visitors, especially at low tide. Here is a great place to spot a Little Egret or two as they are increasing year-round residents, or perhaps a group of Dunlin. It's even more likely to see a wonderful flock of Dark-bellied Brent Geese. At high tide they will be on the farmland feeding, whilst at low tide they will be foraging on the saltmarsh. They are very sociable birds and are distinctive in their chattering to each other whilst they gather, and also when they are flying overhead. The Brents are our iconic winter visitor and we are home to 10,000 individuals during the colder

months before they fly to Siberia for the breeding season.

Continuing along the path, brings the stunning view across to Nore Barn woods with Emsworth to the east, and opposite, the tower of Warblington Castle. Next comes a circular section around an area of natural scrub and grassland. This will be full of wildflowers in the spring, but for now,

the wooded area provides a little shelter from the wind before taking me round to walk back westwards the way I've come. This time, the forts on Portsdown Hill can be clearly seen, bringing me back to the car park.

I sometimes extend this walk by parking in the car park at the southern end of Langstone Bridge and picking up the footpath that runs from the side of the petrol station and across the fields before linking up with Northney Road for a short stretch towards the car park.



Photos © Paul Adams

what's *on?*

Things to do this winter

What's on this winter?

During this quieter period of the year there's still lots to do out in the Harbour. Dramatic backdrops can make it easier to pick out some great wildlife spots, and there are always some great photo opportunities – especially on chilly and frosty mornings when the sun sparkles on the water.

At this time of year thousands of migratory birds spend time here, either on their passage south, or to feed and build up their energy for their flights north in the spring. If you're walking, cycling or out and about with dogs, please take care and stick to the paths to avoid disturbing the birds.



Tree Planting with Friends of Chichester Harbour

For a great opportunity to get out and be active, and meet new people, the Friends of Chichester Harbour organise regular working parties to help manage some routine habitat management and conservation tasks around the area.

In the past few months the team have got stuck in with shrub clearance at The Dell, woodland management at Salterns Copse and tree planting at Itchenor Park Farm.

Winter Boat Trips

Solar Heritage is our wonderful solar-powered boat, and through the winter months is the perfect base from which to spot some of the resident birds and winter visitors. Each trip includes a guide who will be onboard to help pick out some of the key sights and wildlife spots in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Trips leave from the jetty in Itchenor and take place on different days of the week – check out our website or Ticketsource for details and to book online. ▶



Wednesday 11th January - Winter Welly Walk

Join a winter walk with plenty of puddles and squelchy mud, a scavenger hunt and some 'twiggy' art.

Thursday 23rd February - Beautiful Harbour Birds

A chance to learn about the amazing Harbour birds with time on the quay for activities including a 'worm' game, songs and crafts.

Harbour Tots

The colder months see our monthly Harbour Tots sessions taking some shelter inside the Education Centre, although we still like the opportunity to get outdoors to explore the shoreline, wildlife and landscape.

Harbour Tots is our regular pre-school event, which encourages young children and their parents or carers to find out more about Chichester Harbour. Our autumn sessions saw us exploring the Harbour harvest, celebrating the arrival of the winter birds, making bird feeders and finding out about how plants and animals get ready for winter.

Each session typically involves a short walk and some activities outside – so please come dressed for the outdoors whether it's rain or shine!

All Harbour Tots sessions start at **10:30am** and run until **12pm**. Book online through TicketSource.

Star Gazing

Three locations in Chichester Harbour are Dark Sky Discovery sites, part of an accessible nationwide network offering stunning night sky views. Dark skies are very important to human health – they help promote better sleep which improves health and wellbeing. And whilst dark skies are essential for astronomy and an understanding of the universe, there are other reasons why they're important too. Chichester Harbour is a haven for wildlife including nocturnal animals – our bats, badgers, dormice, hedgehogs, spiders and range of insects and molluscs come alive at night.

Our Dark Sky Discovery sites can be enjoyed at:

- North of the John Q. Davis footpath in West Itchenor
- Maybush Copse in Chidham
- Eames Farm on Thorney Island

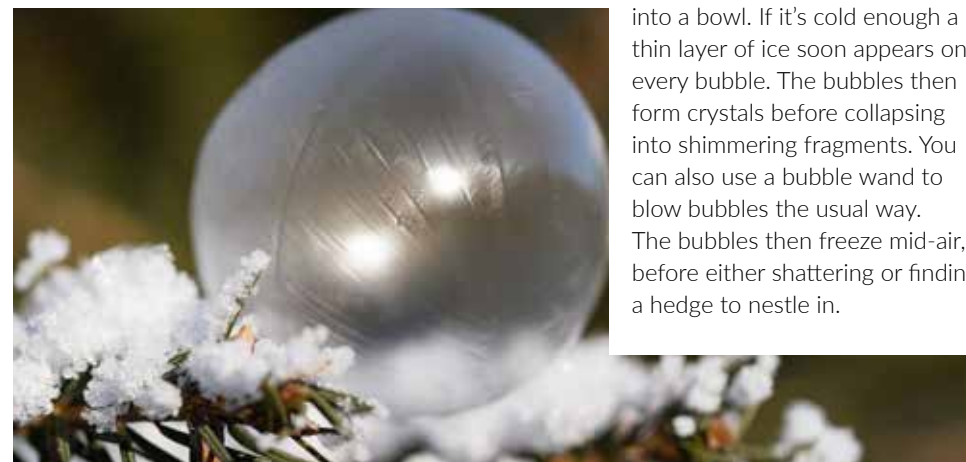
Take a rug, a flask of something to keep you warm and gaze away!



Fun for families

Blow a frozen soap bubble

If you've leftover bubble solution from the summer (or can make your own) and the temperature is very cold, a great outdoor activity is to blow a frozen soap bubble. Find a sheltered spot out of the wind and blow some bubbles into a bowl. If it's cold enough a thin layer of ice soon appears on every bubble. The bubbles then form crystals before collapsing into shimmering fragments. You can also use a bubble wand to blow bubbles the usual way. The bubbles then freeze mid-air, before either shattering or finding a hedge to nestle in.



Make a nature mobile

On your next walk pick up a couple of fallen sticks and gather some pine cones, berries, leaves, shells and pebbles. Once you're back home tie the sticks together in a cross using some twine and hang several long bits of string down from the ends of the stick cross. Then tie on the treasures you've collected and pop outside for a seasonal mobile.



Check out our book review of the *Night Sky Almanac 2023* if you need some guidance on what to spot where!

Spot the difference - can you find six differences in the images below?

Past times

Word search

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

Word Bank

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. RAFT | 2. TERN | 3. OYSTER | 4. HERITAGE |
| 5. SOLAR | 6. HOLLY | 7. HARBOUR | 8. CATCHER |
| 9. WALKS | 10. EMSWORTH | 11. FRIENDS | 12. CRABBING |



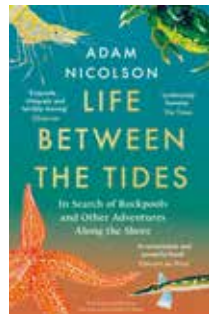


Cosying up

With the colder weather upon us, now's the perfect time to enjoy the comfort of a good book. Here are some of our favourite suggestions:

Life Between the Tides: In Search of Rockpools and Other Adventures Along the Shore

A melting pot of science, history and philosophy, this study of life between the tides takes a close look at rockpools and the habitats found along our shorelines. Longlisted for the Wainwright Prize 2022, this book has been heralded by readers and naturalists alike. It celebrates the importance of our tidal areas and ensure you'll be looking much more closely at the shoreline the next time you venture to the coast.



Mud Patters in the Morning – A History of Wildfowling in Chichester Harbour

Written by local author Steven Borland, this is the first book to trace the rich history of wildfowling in Chichester Harbour. Borland's extensive research gives an insight into the pursuit of wildfowl, from ancient times through the 1850s, often considered the golden age of wildfowling, and up to the present day. The book charts the formation of the Chichester Harbour Wildfowlers' Association, a club which controlled indiscriminate shooting, established sanctuaries and conserved habitat, and explores the part played by founder members including Noel Sedgwick, former editor of Shooting Times. Steven Borland is a Chichester Wildfowler Association committee member, and the Wildfowler's representative on the Chichester Harbour Conservancy Advisory Committee.



Night Sky Almanac 2023: A Stargazer's Guide

This night sky companion is a fantastic guide to the constellations through the seasons. Monthly calendars and maps explain the lunar phases, special events, meteor spots and other things to look out for when exploring the stars. It's a lovely handbook which has been written and illustrated by astronomical experts Storm Dunlop and Wil Tirion and approved by the astronomers of the Royal Observatory Greenwich.

An Anthology of Aquatic Life

A beautiful new book which offers an introduction to the aquatic world for younger readers. With spectacular photography and engaging illustrations there are descriptions of lifeforms, and plenty of fascinating facts. There's a great section on how plants have learnt to live, feed and breathe in water, and plenty of detail about habitats and ecosystems including rivers, lakes, wetlands and more.



Find our book suggestions at **Waterstones, Amazon or other good bookshops.**

Chichester Harbour

Spotter's guide

With crisp and clear conditions, winter offers a very different perspective of Chichester Harbour. If you're out and about enjoying the landscape, try looking out for these wonderful nature spots.

Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

What? A distinctive black and white shorebird, with a carrot-orange bill and a feisty personality. They generally have a lot to say for themselves.

Where? Find them around the Harbour on shorelines, mudflats and sometimes inland fields. Large flocks form in winter at high tide, particularly on Pilsay Island and Ella Nore spit.

When? Oystercatchers are here all year, with the largest numbers present in autumn and winter, and few pairs nesting in summer.

Did You Know? Oystercatchers are one of the most long-lived of shorebirds, with a maximum recorded lifespan in the UK of 41 years. Many of the individuals who spend the winter in Chichester Harbour will probably have been coming here for years.



Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

What? A familiar evergreen, native tree, with beautifully glossy and famously spikey leaves and, on female trees, clusters of deep red berries.

Where? In woodlands and sometimes hedges all around the Harbour and surrounding farmland. Both the native species and various cultivars are also commonly found in gardens.

When? All year, but the leaves and the berries, along with the plant's seasonal connotations, make the tree more conspicuous in the winter months.

Did You Know? A much written about tree, with a long association with Christmas, the ferocious spines on the leaves only form in response to cutting or browsing. Mature Holly trees, untouched by the hedge-trimmer, will usually exhibit spines only on the lower branches that have been browsed by rabbits or deer, with the higher leaves being entirely smooth.



Photo © Shirley Rushmer



Conger Eel (*Conger*)

What? One of the meanest looking fish you will ever see, with one of the best names. They are blue-black in colour and can grow to at least 2.5m.

Where? Congers live in holes or caves on the sea floor and can be found down to depths of about 500m. Not exactly a Chichester Harbour resident, but our Rangers discovered an impressive 1.5m-long specimen washed up dead on Thorney Island recently.

When? Lurking off shore all year.

Did You Know? Very little is known about their breeding sites, except Congers are thought to breed only once in their lives in the deep water of the mid-Atlantic. They take between 5 and 15 years to reach breeding age.

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* Emsworth in July/August