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Spring finally arrives in the South Downs!

Welcome to the [March newsletter](#) for the South Downs National Park as spring is finally in the air! The days are getting warmer and longer and it's such a treat to see life emerging in every corner of the South Downs. With that in mind we're celebrating the start of the new season by sharing some fabulous and uplifting walks that are guaranteed to put a spring in your step! There are lots of newborn animals emerging,

particularly lambs, and birds making nests on the ground, so it's a good time to keep our adorable and inquisitive dogs on leads!

Also this month find out about the amazing comeback of one of Britain's rarest birds right here in the National Park, as well as other interesting updates.

Our competition this month focuses on one of the National Park's many artisan makers and the chance to win handcrafted locally-sourced homeware worth over £400. Read on to learn more! 😊

[Click here to read a PDF version of South Downs News](#)



Mythical “goatsucker” bird makes comeback in South Downs

They are one of Britain's most elusive birds, known for their “churring” song when darkness falls and a supernatural reputation thanks to their **mythical ability to steal milk from goats**.

Now the [nightjar is making a remarkable comeback](#) in the National Park, thanks to nature recovery efforts and better habitat management.

Since recording began in the late 1990s, 2025 was a **record year** for the camouflaged bird, which migrates every spring to fly 4,000 miles from the Democratic Republic of Congo to the lowland heaths of East Hampshire in the National Park.

Work has focused on protecting and increasing lowland heath, which provides perfect ground-nesting sites for nightjars.

Engagement rangers have also been out in the landscape over the past decade, encouraging people to care for the landscape, including keeping dogs on leads, picking up dog poo and sticking to pathways to avoid disturbing the nightjars and other wildlife.

[Find out more](#)





Put a spring in your step!

There's a **kaleidoscope of colour** in every direction, bluebells are blooming and the sweet smell of cherry blossom fills the air.

Welcome to spring! After a long winter, the warmth of spring is finally upon us and that means more wonderful walks in the National Park, admiring all the sights, sounds and scents of the new life-giving season.

It's a wonderful time to get out and see nature rising from its winter slumber, with butterflies emerging, reptiles basking in the sun and newborn lambs bouncing around in the fields.

Here are some inspiring spring stumps you might like to consider!

Find out some of the best spring stumps

Young people show off their talent in contest

Young photographers who captured the beauty of the natural world on camera were crowned winners of the National Park's annual photo competition.

The contest this year celebrated the 15th anniversary of the National Park and asked children to submit images of their favourite aspects of the South Downs. [Discover the winners here.](#)



Our commitment to climate action

The simple things we can all do to help tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions have been the focus of an innovative training programme.

Staff from across the National Park Authority have been taking part in

training to understand the causes and impacts of climate change. [Learn more.](#)

Connecting children with Western Downs

An exciting initiative to connect schoolchildren with the wonders of the Hampshire Downs returns for 2026.

The project, called Explorers of the South Downs, is calling on applications from primary and secondary schools with more than 25% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals. [Learn more here.](#)



The meaning of water in all our lives...

Pauline Rutter is a programme manager for Writing Our Legacy, an arts and heritage organisation enabling Black, Asian and ethnically diverse people to tell their story through writing and the creative arts.

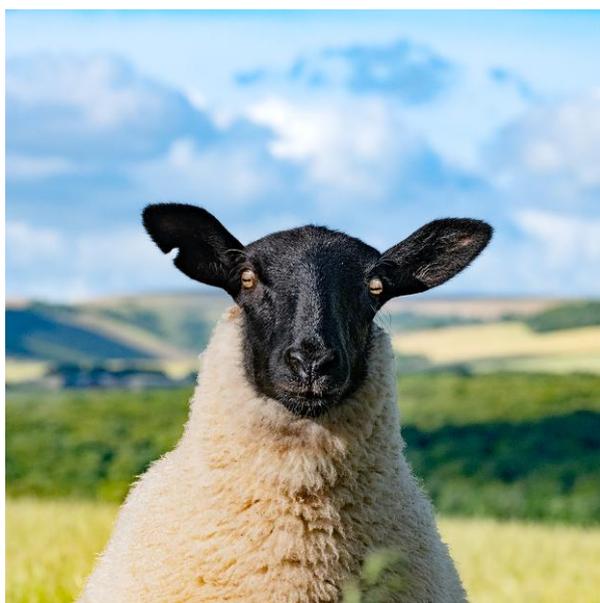
[Here she writes about an initiative to explore people's connections with water in the landscape.](#)

Hurray! Huge hedgerow is nearly completed

A huge hedgerow connecting the South Downs National Park and the New Forest National Park is inching closer to completion.

More than 13,724m of new hedgerow has now been planted in Hampshire, edging closer to the target of 15,000m.

[Find out more here.](#)



Ewe herd it here first!

An “assertive” ewe has won the hearts of the public in our annual photo competition.

“Feeling Sheepish”, by Ian Cairns, took the top spot in The People’s Choice poll, which attracted over 800 votes.

[Find out more about the image.](#)

Win South Downs-inspired homeware!



By Paul Staden, Founder & Maker at Pilgrim House

I'm surrounded by the beauty and shifting shades of the South Downs National Park, in the quiet folds between chalk paths and hedgerows, where colours sit naturally in

perfect harmony, and where I call home. It was this bucolic beauty and local vernacular that inspired me to establish Pilgrim House.

From our workshop in Chichester, we hand-make authentic, uncomplicated cabinets and homewares.

All the pieces are designed with restraint, bringing a sense of calm and function to the home, perhaps offering an antidote to the hectic world: a simpler, slower, more thoughtful way of living.

Timeless, versatile and full of character, made with the kind of craftsmanship that feels increasingly rare today. We aim to create pieces that feel settled from the beginning and only improve with time, combining traditional craft techniques with considered proportions and design restraint.

Our wood is all sourced from a local mill within the National Park, and our collaborators are dotted throughout the South Downs. Our inaugural signature colour palette was inspired by the South Downs environment, with colours taking their names from the local nature, such as Chalk Stream, Dew Pond, Sussex White and, of course, Flint. To celebrate the work the South Downs National Park does for the community, Pilgrim House is offering newsletter readers the opportunity to win a handcrafted piece from our “Weft” collection, in their choice of ash or oak, worth £449.

Weft echoes a simpler, more honest time. Each piece features a hand-woven back, bringing structure and softness into balance while showcasing the natural richness of the timber. Contemporary yet quietly enduring, it is suffused with purpose and functionality.

Like all our furniture, the piece will be made by hand especially for its new owner. Anyone who signs up to receive the [Pilgrim House newsletter](#) during March will be automatically entered the draw, as will any [new subscribers to South Downs News](#). Good luck to everyone!

See Ts and Cs [here](#).



Coming up this March



- Head to Seven Sisters for a weekend of guided walks, talks and a fun family event to celebrate [World Water Day](#). All the action takes place on the weekend of 21 and 22 March and includes guided tours with rangers from Sussex Wildlife Trust, South Downs National Park, National Trust, Eastbourne Downland, Beachy Head Ambassadors and Natural England. Pre-booking is required. There will also be a fascinating talks and a fun, family day at the visitor centre, including make your own aquifer, test your water knowledge and learn how to conserve water.
- Can you read maps? It's not something that comes easily to all of us so a special day has been organised to help people get to grips with the age-old skill! Take part in a [one-day navigation for beginners session](#) for a relaxed, practical day learning the ins and outs of map reading and compass use in the beautiful South Downs countryside. This is perfect for you if you are a beginner or feel you have forgotten the art of map reading. This course is designed to build your confidence and skills, enabling you to safely and independently explore our beautiful countryside.
- Head to [Gilbert White's House and Gardens](#), Selborne, for their "Timothy's Tots – Bugs and bees" session on 24 March. You can join Timothy the Tortoise for an interactive preschool sessions connecting your child to nature and the changing seasons. Sessions include stories, songs, craft and sensory activities.
- Head to Arundel for all things tulips! From 28 March to 23 April, an exhibition will be taking place at [Arundel Museum](#), led by the Arun Creative Stitchers. They are a friendly group of sewing enthusiasts who gather regularly to share ideas, exchange techniques, and inspire one another. The exhibition will run alongside the highly-anticipated Tulip Festival at Arundel Castle.

Discover our amazing water habitats on World Water Day!

SEVEN SISTERS
SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Saturday 21 - Sunday 22 March

A weekend of guided walks, talks and events to celebrate World Water Day.

Family Fun Day

Sun 22 March

10am - 4pm

Celebrate World Water Day with hands-on activities. Fun for all the family!

Visitor Centre,
Seven Sisters Country Park,
East Dean Road, BN25 4AD

FREE

Talks - Sun 22 March

Pre-booking required.

Dew Ponds - an illustrated talk by David Riviere

10.30am & 12noon



Chalk Reef of the Beachy Head West Marine Conservation Zone

by Sussex Wildlife Trust

2pm

FREE



©Jeff Torris



©Tim Xipell

Guided Walks

Sat 21 & Sun 22 March

Various start times.

Discover local landscapes on a guided tour with expert rangers at:

- Seaford Head
- Seven Sisters Downland
- Beachy Head
- Lullington Heath
- Eastbourne Downland
- Seven Sisters Dew Ponds

Pre-booking required.

FREE



Book tickets and find out more:
[sevensisters.org.uk/
celebrating-world-water-day](https://sevensisters.org.uk/celebrating-world-water-day)



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