

May 2026 Newsletter

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COMMONER's MONTHLY No dry May Please

We need to eat and our livestock need to eat!

April was very warm and dry and the grass has grown. When out on the Forest I can see the grass has started and is longer under the gorse and amongst the heather. The summer grazing cattle and ponies have been depastured and you can see there is enough 'grub' as my father would have said. The ponies are standing around and have stopped working the landscape to find that extra mouth full and are replete and the cattle are laying up and chewing the cud. The Commoners and farmers have been busy with silage making taking the grass 'there is there' for the upcoming winter feeding.

We now need is a wet May as it is the mares have foaled and need extra grass to produce the milk for the foals.

Yes, the weather is never right for us, but it is never wrong to wish.

Ann Sevier MBE Commoner and NFA Council Member

Its Spring – thank goodness

This is a time of year which reminds us why we work long and hard to protect the Forest. It is a time when it is easy to see and enjoy some of the Forest treasures. The foals are being born and the stallions are out, bringing a different dynamic to the grazing ponies.

The bluebells have largely been and gone but during their brief time they gave such a glorious display (and smell) under lime green leaves as the trees burst into leaf. The

delicate wood anemones joined them and of course not forgetting the primroses and violets. On the heaths the gorse is a yellow blast of colour with that aroma of tropical fruits that makes one wonder where you are. Early orchids are around too. The bracken is making its presence felt in that extraordinary way of pushing through the ground before branching out in recognisable fronds.

Then there are the birds both on the Forest and the coast. Everyone remembers their first cuckoo of the year and the return of the swallows and martins but there are other less distinctive but just as important migrants to spot and hear too – redstarts, the warblers, the spotted flycatchers and the nightjars to name a few. With the light mornings it is not difficult to get up and hear the dawn chorus. On the coast I look forward to the return of the terns. They are such amazing flyers and divers and seem quite noisy individuals amongst the usual gulls. The butterflies are out and about too on sunny days – it is just the start of their fluttering displays.

I have not yet spotted an adder sunning themselves in a sheltered spot, but I am sure they are out there. Tadpoles on the other hand are in the ponds where they have been since my childhood. It is good that some things do not change.

I do just love this time of year!

Sarah Nield, Chair

Campaign Update

Verge Update

Car Parking Charges are here, and the immediate impact seems to be less busy car parks. To date verge parking is not as widespread as feared and we really hope it stays that way as the summer progresses and the Forest gets busier. So please don't forget to contribute to Verge Watch.

We have been asked to remind our members that the verges along the A35 are protected and Forestry England are under a duty to bring them into favourable condition. So please do use Verge Watch to report parking along this road which also gives access to some of the more sensitive Forest areas particularly for ground nesting birds.

We will also be asking Forestry England at our next meeting what their policy will be for those 'unofficial car parking areas.' We all know where some are in our local areas.

New Forest Together Road Shows - Lyndhurst, Mon 15 June, 7pm

This non-political campaign against the carve up of the New Forest is taking its message right to the heart of Forest communities. The first of a series of roadshows across the

Forest will be held on Monday 15 June, at 7pm, in the Linden Hall, Lyndhurst Community Centre, central car park.

Come along to meet the campaign founders, James and Emily Hartley-Binns, and find out more about what the government's plan for Local Government Re-organisation will mean for the whole Forest. You will also be able to see how you can support the campaign which is aimed at preserving the New Forest as we know it. Members of the New Forest Association are most welcome.

The meeting is kindly supported by Lyndhurst Parsh Council.



You can also watch the contribution of the NFA Chair and Dr Jo Ivey, NFA Council Member to the New Forest Together First Podcast at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbCLUg_bS9s

Tree Felling in the Bird Nesting Season

The NFA has been working with the Hampshire Ornithological Society (HOS) to try and ensure that birds' nests are protected from tree felling during the bird nesting season which is generally regarded as running from March until the end of July. Various car parks near to ground nesting bird areas are closed during this time and there are also notices warning walkers to stay on the main tracks to limit disturbance. It is important that these signs are observed.

As we explained in our April Newsletter, habitat restoration brings tree felling. Now that the weather is dryer, it is tempting for Forestry England to carry out felling and thinning operations. We believe firmly that such work does not comply with their Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 duties but, in a spirit of compromise this year, we have accepted that felling can proceed subject to prior checks for any breeding activity by an experienced ornithologist. HOS volunteers have carried these checks prior to any felling at Fawley Inclosure and now FE have engaged an experienced ornithologist to conduct surveys. We hope that this arrangement will prove satisfactory, but we continue to monitor the situation.



SUMMER GUESTS

Whilst not on everyone's priority reading list, the Revised National Planning Policy Framework 2024 has been updated and is due to be published in July. Although the headlines will probably be on the bigger issues, it is expected to require all new build houses to include nature friendly features such as swift bricks to support wildlife.' This is particularly good news not only for swift enthusiasts and conservationists but for the birds themselves which have flown 6000 miles from central Africa to spend the summer months here.

These amazing birds live in the air only touching down to breed in high level gaps and holes in the walls or roofs of old buildings. Sadly, the numbers have declined by over 50% in the last 30 years due mainly to a lack of nesting sites and a dramatic fall in the insect population, the swifts' staple diet. The problem has been renovations to older buildings that have led to the gaps and holes being filled and open eaves closed in with plastic fascias and soffits. New buildings offer no such opportunities which is bad news not only for swifts, sparrows and starlings but also deprives us the privilege of enjoying their lively presence around our homes.

We can help by providing swift nest boxes. My own experience and that of other enthusiasts in Lyndhurst is that this is really making a difference. Swift numbers in the village are noticeably rising and from May to August the welcome sight and sound of a screaming party low over the rooftops and between the houses is a highlight of the year. The excitement increases when the chicks are near the time to leave, their chirping attracts the local colony to fly by the nesting sites noisily encouraging the youngsters to join them. A joyous time not only for the birds but equally for those of us watching.

Swifts are also site faithful which means once they are attracted to a nest box they will return year after year. I have several boxes some with cameras and have greatly enjoyed seeing the chicks being raised. It's now mid-May and the breeding adults have started to arrive, all that's needed is some overdue fine weather so that we can look up and listen.

To install a nest box and for more information contact Hampshire Swifts at hampshireswifts.co.uk

Bernie Austin, Chair of Transport & Planning Committee



The New Forest Trust

It has been known for people to confuse the New Forest Association and the New Forest Trust. We are closely associated with the same aim of protecting and sustaining the Forest, but we do different things as William Ziegler, Chair of the New Forest trust and NFA Trustee explains.



Incorporated as a charity in 2003 the original plan for the Trust, as envisaged by its founder Donald Thompson, the then Deputy Surveyor, was for it to receive a proportion (12.5%) of the car parking charges which the Forestry Commission were proposing at that time. This would have ensured that a proportion of the monies raised would have been used in a way that was guaranteed to benefit the forest as “extra money” and administered by an independent charity totally separate from the Forestry Commission.

However, as you will know, parking charges were not introduced then but have been subsequently. However, Forestry England (on behalf of the Forestry Commission)

have now made it clear that the original idea of a percentage being used for the direct benefit to the Forest via the Trust was no longer on offer.

This left the Trustees with a fully formed charity, with a charitable remit to work for the future protection of the Forest but no income stream. To solve this the Trustees decided to turn to businesses based in the Forest, in particular those in the hospitality sector, and encourage them to help raise money from their customers for the benefit of the Trust and thereby the Forest.

A good number (see our website for a full list) have rallied round and help in a variety of ways ranging from donation pots and events to donations added to hotel stays and food bills. We also receive donations in other ways such as Just Giving, in memoriam and legacies.

We are enormously grateful to our supporters, with whose help we have, so far, been able to raise and distribute £399,771.69. This money has been distributed, mostly through our small grant scheme. This scheme offers grants of up to £5,000 to projects which have a direct benefit to the New Forest and clearly support our charitable purposes which are :

- *Promoting the conservation, protection and improvement of the New Forest*
- *Promoting the conservation and protection of the commoning livestock, the deer and other flora and fauna of the New Forest*
- *Promoting the education and understanding of the public in the commoning of livestock, of fauna and flora and the environment of the New Forest.*

These charitable objectives align very closely with those of the New Forest Association, and the two organisations operate in distinct yet complementary ways. The Association serving as a vigilant campaigner and watchdog, as opposed to the Trust which remains strictly “non-political”, focusing solely on raising funds which are then used for projects that will benefit the Forest.

If you would like more information about what we do, especially about the sort of projects we have supported, or donate please visit our website at www.newforesttrust.org.uk. Lastly, we are always looking for new ways to raise money, especially from our visitors and if you have any thoughts or ideas that might help, please contact me - chairman@newforesttrust.org.uk

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William Ziegler, Chair New Forest Trust and Trustee of the New Forest Association

Legacies and the Good They Do

The New Forest Association can only operate with the financial support of its members through subscriptions and through donations and legacies. So for instance, we fund research and this year we have made a grant to the Freshwater and Habitats Trust to support their valuable work on Forest streams and watercourses. Over the past 12 months we have also funded public meetings, for example on Verge Parking, and campaigns, including the NFDog campaign against dog faeces and we will be committing some funds to the New Forest Together Campaign.

So, we would like to thank those who have given generous legacies to the Association these include the estates of George Hollobone, Mrs Rosemary Billett and Mr Bowring, via le Guet Trust.

Details of how you can donate can be found on our website

<https://newforestassociation.org/donate/>

News and Events

Event Report : The AGM Talks: Rivers at Risk

At the AGM this year our talks focussed on the state of our rivers and watercourses. We were treated to two insightful and memorable talks by Rose O'Neill, CEO of Campaign for National Parks, and Naomi Ewald of the Freshwater and Habitats Trusts. Rose gave us the national picture as exposed by their Rivers at Risk Report

(https://www.cnp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/RiverAtRisk_Report_2025_FINAL.pdf) whilst Naomi focussed on the New Forest amazing system of watercourses and rivers.

Rose highlighted that although national parks, including the New Forest, contain some of the nations most important watercourses, they too often fall below national standards. She reported CNP's findings that national parks suffer a much higher level of sewage discharge than other areas. In the New Forest it is double – we reported on the most serious incidents in our March Newsletter

<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/Ft9hCG0UurJcOloi?ref=Link>. The reasons CNP believe is that remedial works in rural areas have only a low priority although they often have the least efficient treatment plants. A failure to account for visitor numbers within the statistics that determine upgrading priorities is a further factor.

Naomi gave us a wonderful account of the unique qualities of the New Forest streams and importantly our ponds, both temporary and permanent, as well as the rare species that live in them. A favourite being the tadpole shrimp which is only found here and near the Solway Firth see <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/species/tadpole-shrimp/>. She emphasised that too often our focus is on the mouth of rivers rather than their headwaters where the really pristine habitats are found.

Both Rose and Naomi described the important work their organisations are doing to rescue our rivers and watercourses from political campaigns to practical projects and research. Both the NFA and the NFT are supporting Naomi's work on the health of New Forest ponds. It was also interesting to have representative of New Forest Friends of the Earth and the New Forest Biodiversity Forum attending and contributing to our lively post talk discussions. There is no doubt that we all must fight hard to retain what we have and remedy the threats they face. As Naomi argued the New Forest offers the real prospect of a leading example of a pristine water habitat.



Upcoming Members Events

Thursday 4th June at 4.00pm

It is almost time to learn more about the recent work of the **Bucklers Hard Shipyard Trust led by Mary Montagu Scott**. We are very grateful to Mary for this kind offer to host this event. A pleasant evening drink may be enjoyed afterwards at The Master Builders!

So don't delay sign up before the tickets sell out <https://www.ticketsource.com/new-forest-association/visit-to-bucklers-hard/e-jzpvlj>

July 2026

In July (date yet to be fixed) we have been kindly invited to **The Old House at Burley** by Ian Petty for a walk in a part of the Forest where there is no public car park nearby. Full details will follow.

20th August 2026

On **Thursday 20th August** we will repeat our very popular visit to **Needs Ore Nature Reserve**. We are grateful to the Beaulieu Estate for hosting us once more at this very special place at the entrance to Beaulieu River which is not open to the public. Full details will follow.

Other Events – visit the relevant websites for full details.

New Forest Heritage Centre

From Myth to Maker - New Forest Folklore in New Forest Craft - Saturday 2nd May 2026 to Sunday 31st May 2026. Amidst a national 'folklore revival' and increasing interest in New Forest stories and legend, New Forest Marque and the New Forest Cultural Council will be exploring this aspect of the past, with local makers and creatives displaying and selling their folklore-inspired work.



A Lyndhurst Family's Story Thursday 4th June 2026 6.00pm A talk by Graham Walters on Thursday 4th June at 6pm at the New Forest Heritage Centre on The Hugheses – high street jewellers, village benefactors, and a wartime air-gunner.



St Barbe's Museum

Climate Chat – Lifestyle Choice on 11th June at 6.30pm The third in the museum's series of quarterly Climate Chats which focuses on the everyday choices that shape a more sustainable future. This session explores how our lifestyles – what we buy, how we travel, what we eat and the habits we form – can become powerful tools for positive environmental change.



