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Awesome August in your National Park!

Welcome to the [August 2026 newsletter](#) for the South Downs National Park. We're now well into the summer holidays and although it's still baking hot, there are thankfully some slightly cooler mornings and evenings to enjoy! Those cooler times are the perfect time to explore the South Downs and get up into the hills. If you're looking to escape the summer heat, we're sharing some **ideas for shady walks** in the

National Park. We thankfully have a lot of forest, so there are a plethora of options! It wouldn't be a British summer without a **sumptuous cream tea**, so we're sharing some of the best spots in the South Downs to enjoy this tradition!

The risk of wildfires is very high at the moment as the ground is tinder dry, so do take extra care over the coming weeks and **please do bring a picnic rather than a barbecue** 😊 🍷 Putting all litter in bins - or taking it home with you if there is no bin - is more important than ever at the moment.

Much of the National Park is looking golden rather than green at the moment, as captured here in this photograph of Fulking Escarpment by Matthew Gibson.

This month we're giving away a **free family pass for up to six people** for a day-out experiencing a new interactive play facility in the National Park. Read on to learn more!

For the **solar eclipse tomorrow**, we're sharing some of our tips so do read on!

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



Beautiful butterflies take centre stage

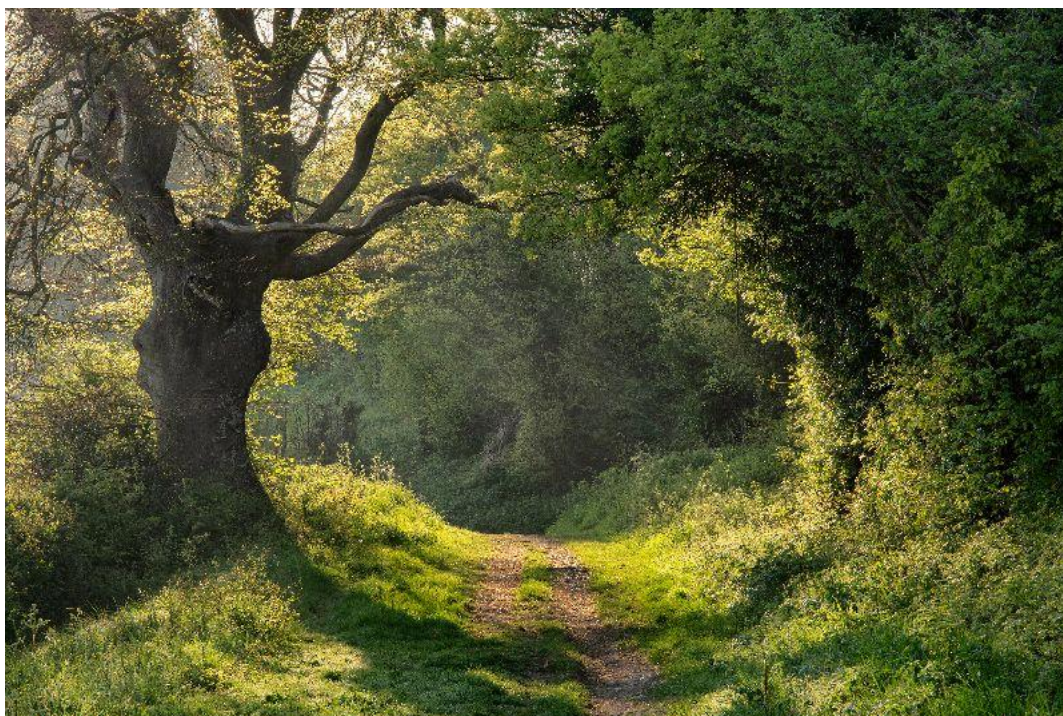
A major boost for wildlife, including rare butterflies, is on the way at Butser Hill Nature Reserve – the highest point on the South Downs chalk ridge.

Over the next three years, the Boosting Butser's Butterflies project will restore 48 hectares – or around 2,000 tennis courts – of chalk grassland and woodland edge.

Once complete, the work will provide improved conditions for orchids, cowslip, harebell, and beautiful butterflies such as the Chalk Hill Blue and the nationally-scarce

Duke of Burgundy (pictured above)

[Learn more about this exciting project here.](#)



Best shady walks in the National Park

Finding a shady walk to shelter from the blinding heat of the sun has become an essential task for many this summer.

The South Downs is actually one of the **most wooded of the English National Parks** and offers some lovely alternatives to the classic ‘top of the Downs’ experience.

We’ve put together a collection of routes in the South Downs that offer some shade whether you are walking with your family, out for a serious trek or taking your dog out for a stroll in the early morning. [Find out more here.](#)



Jam, strawberries and lots of cream!

The great British tradition of tea, finger sandwiches and scones is almost 200 years old and is one of the true joys of the summer – or any time of year for that matter!

Afternoon Tea Week takes place from 10 August to 15 August and is the perfect excuse to enjoy some sweet and savoury treats in the National Park.

[Here are some of the best places](#) to enjoy a cream tea to remember.

New Local Plan moves forward to next stage

More than 2,700 representations on the National Park's new Local Plan are currently being analysed in preparation for the next important stages of the planning process.

[Learn more here.](#)



Businesses give back to help the South Downs

More than £16,000 has been raised for charity over the past year as businesses across Hampshire and Sussex are giving back to help nature.

[Find out more here.](#)



Investing in community energy of the future

The National Park Authority is investing in community-based renewable energy, including a range of **new solar panels** in the Brighton area.

[Learn more here.](#)



Celebrating the National Park's amazing rangers!

World Ranger Day took place recently, so we thought we would catch up with our of our Rangers, Kirsty Murray, who swapped detective work for nature walks on heathlands.

[Find out more about Kirsty here!](#)

Join in the fun of our Youth Action scheme!

Paula da Luz, the National Park's Youth Engagement Officer, writes about how young people are helping to shape the future of conservation and highlights the many volunteering opportunities we have for people aged 16 to 25.

[Learn more here.](#)



Other news from your National Park



Queen visits the National Park

Her Majesty The Queen recently visited the South Downs. Find out why!

[Read More →](#)

“Nature is critical for all of us”

Aimee Felus, Chief Executive of the Western Sussex Rivers Trust, writes about the impact of the climate crisis this summer.

[Read More →](#)

Win free day out at science experience!



An exciting interactive exhibit inspired by the rare chalk streams of the National Park has opened at Winchester Science Centre.

Three new outdoor exhibits - Dino Dig, The Chalk Stream and Dormouse Den – have opened as part of a “play wild” theme.

The new facilities are the brainchild of educational charity [Wonderseekers](#), which is based at the science centre.

In the stream-inspired area, children can sit under a waterfall and experiment with water flow using a pump, dams and accessible interaction points – all designed to encourage collaborative play and scientific curiosity.

Meanwhile, youngsters can also dig for prehistoric life and identify fossil finds at a real research station.

And, if that wasn't enough fun, they can climb, leap and hide like hazel dormice on an interactive immersive exhibition.

Ben Ward, CEO of Wonderseekers, said: "Set within the breathtaking landscape of the South Downs National Park, these new experiences invite children to explore, experiment and discover the world around them, turning every visit into an opportunity for adventure, investigation and learning."

Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the National Park Authority, said: "It's fantastic that Winchester Science Centre & Planetarium is helping children understand the importance of their local landscape and the rare habitats that depend on our protection."

We're offering a family ticket (up to six people) to try out the new facilities. The ticket includes entry to the Science Centre (access to all indoor and outdoor exhibits), one show in the Planetarium, and live science shows and demos.

People signing up to the newsletter during August will be automatically entered into the draw to win the family ticket. Those who are already signed up can email "Wonderseekers" to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 31 August. Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).



Coming up this August



Late summer on the South Downs is famous for its purple heather heathlands

- Get ready for a vibrant celebration of music, arts and drama as MADhurst returns to Midhurst with a fantastic programme of events and activities. From live performances and exhibitions to workshops and family-friendly fun, there's plenty to look forward to this month. Events include comedy shows, historic walks, opera and jazz. See the full programme [here](#).
- Head to Kennel Hill, near Chichester, on 22 August for a wonderful [vintage market](#). You can browse a handpicked collection of vintage clothing, hats, jewellery and accessories from the 40s, 50s and 60s. Whether you're searching for a show-stopping dress, a dapper waistcoat or those all-important finishing touches, you'll find plenty of inspiration for the season ahead. Vintage style authority Dawn Gracie will be bringing her signature energy to the day, sharing expert styling advice, shopping tips and vintage know-how, all accompanied by a soundtrack of classic tunes from the eras we love.
- Head to [Findon Place](#), near Worthing, on 23 August for an open day as part of the National Garden Scheme. The most glorious setting for a tapestry of perennial borders set off by Sussex flint walls. The many charms including a yew allée, cloud pruned trees, espaliered fruit trees, a productive ornamental kitchen garden, rose arbours and arches, and a cutting garden. Pre-booking essential.
- The [Ouse Valley Folk Festival](#) takes place on 28 and 29 August, celebrating the rich musical heritage of the area and the artists keeping folk culture vibrant, evolving and deeply rooted in community. Set against the riverside backdrop of The Sidings in Newhaven, the festival brings together traditional music, contemporary folk, storytelling, workshops and dancing for an intimate celebration of one of Britain's most enduring musical traditions.
- If you live, work or visit West Sussex, a new climate survey has been launched to find out people's views on a climate adaptation plan for the county. [Take part here](#).



An update on the **solar eclipse** and other celestial events from the National Park's "Queen of Darkness", Elinor Newman, who organises our annual dark skies programme.

Look to the skies tomorrow!

Get your **eclipse glasses** ready – a “deep” partial solar eclipse (over 90% eclipsed) will occur on Wednesday 12 August, starting at 6.17pm, maximum at 7.13pm and

concluding at 8.06pm. Again, a good view to the west/north-west will be ideal, along with clear skies! Please don't try to look at the sun without proper eclipse glasses or suitably filtered telescopes.

There are several astronomy groups who are holding special events, including the Winchester Science Centre, the South Downs Planetarium in Chichester, the Observatory Science Centre at Herstmonceux, Lewes Astronomical Society and Sussex Sidewalk Astronomers. Links to local astronomy groups can be found on the Dark Skies hub [here](#).

We expect elevated points in the National Park to be busier tomorrow, so we're asking people to take their litter home with them, park responsibly, and please don't bring barbecues as the wildfire risk is high.

It should be an amazing spectacle, but it's really important to wear proper eclipse glasses to avoid damaging your eyes 😊

Also on 12 August, the Perseid meteor shower peaks. This year it is during a new moon so it is a great night for Dark Skies, provided the clouds stay away! The Perseid meteor shower comes around yearly as the Earth orbits through debris left by comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle, and can produce many bright fast meteors with trains, up to 150 per hour at its peak. If 12 August doesn't work because of weather, it is worth going out on the days either side, particularly the days before the peak.

They are called "Perseids" because if you track back the trail of the meteor they will look like they are coming from the constellation Perseus, but the meteors can appear in any area of the sky so a nice big open view is helpful, and all you need is your eyes and some patience!

To hear more from Elinor, check out her fascinating podcasts "Embrace The Darkness", available on streaming platforms, celebrating the amazing wonders of the South Downs International Dark Sky Reserve 🌟🌍

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