

Sun Rising News

The twice yearly newsletter of
Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve

Spring/Summer 2011



Welcome to the natural burial ground's spring/summer newsletter for 2011.

A Call for Volunteers

A few individuals and families are regular visitors to Sun Rising, and I have been wondering if any would like to become more involved in caring for the site.

If you visit the burial ground once a week, for example, would you like to help with tasks such as keeping the birdfeeder topped up, or simply letting me know if something needs doing on days I can't make it myself? We would, of course, provide you with all you needed.

There are also opportunities for those keen to help on a less regular basis, including jobs that need a little vigour such as bulb and tree planting, or cutting the wildflower meadow.

We hope volunteering at Sun Rising will allow families to feel they are actively involved in its development as a nature reserve and a place of deep peace. If you would like to volunteer, let me know. We can have a chat to see what would best suit you.

Nature Notes

As spring returns, our fields, hedgerows and woods once again turn green. After such a cold winter it is always a welcome relief.

The first to come into leaf are the elder and honeysuckle, as the buds on the hawthorn begin to break. A few weeks' later the hedgerows are misty-white with blackthorn flowers. Hawthorn and blackthorn are our most common hedgerow shrubs;

the hawthorn's pinky-white flowers come after the leaves have opened, while the blackthorn blooms on dark bare twigs, usually only leafing when the flowers are over.

'Oak before ash, in for a splash - ash before oak, in for a soak' is an old saying that refers to the order in which ash and oak come into leaf. Irrespective of the temperature, the ash is a late leafing tree and could normally be expected to come into leaf after most other trees. The oak by contrast is affected by the temperature, leafing earlier if the spring is warm. If the old saying is correct this would suggest that a warm spring equates to a warm dry summer, which would be very welcome after the cool wet summers we have had of late. Keep an eye on the ash and oak.

Many of our wildflowers, especially the woodland varieties, are early flowering. This trait has evolved in order to allow the plant to complete its reproductive cycle before the woodland canopy closes.

The snowdrops started to flower in late January and the daffodils in time for St David's Day on 1st March. Such perennials that grow from bulbs, tubers and rhizomes store food over winter and so get off to a flying start in the spring, often flowering before annual plants can germinate and start their life cycles.

As the season unfolds, snakeshead fritillary, bluebells, and ramsons appear. We hope the population of cowslips will continue to flourish in the meadow. You may also see the wild arum down in the hedge bottoms; commonly known as cuckoo pint, its flowering



Picture of the Skylark by Robin Restall

coincides with the return of the cuckoo after its long winter absence. Yarrow, oxeye daisy, selfheal, cranesbill and teasel will follow along with other wildflowers and the less ornate, wind pollinated, flowering grasses.

The dates on which migrant birds return from their wintering locations have been getting earlier. However, these changes are not as great as they are for plants or insects, giving rise to concerns that migrant birds are not adapting sufficiently rapidly to a warming climate. It is now thought that changes in day length trigger migration from Africa, but that temperature modifies migration speed. Some of the returning migrants to look out for are the swallows and house martins; they'll be seen feasting on the flying insects that will soon be filling the sky.

As the season progresses more food becomes available allowing insects and animals to reproduce and to feed and rear their young. The food chain that fuels life on earth is dependent on plant life. These amazing organisms, which can turn sunlight into energy, are the basis of life and their return is a welcome symbol of the reawakening of the world after the deep sleep of winter.

Newsletters

We are moving the dates of our Newsletter to the turning points of the year – to mid March and September. Our hope is that this will give you a better view of events and developments in the season ahead. Many apologies if some of the information in this edition is repeated from the last.

Following an upgrading of our system in the office, we can offer you the option of receiving the newsletter by email. If you would like to receive it digitally, do let us know. If you are not on our mailing list at all and would like to be, let us know if you'd like to hear from us by email or post.

Bulb Planting 2011

If you are interested in planting bulbs on and around your loved one's graves this autumn, do get in touch and we'll let you have any necessary information.

Summer Events in 2011

Nature Watch Dates

There are three Nature Watch dates in the diary for this year, when we shall be continuing to record the flora and fauna at the site. You are very welcome to come along, whether expert or amateur.

Spring : **Saturday 9 April**

Summer : **Saturday 4 – Sunday 5 June**

Harvest : **Saturday 20 August.**

Do let us know if you intend to come so that, should we have to postpone for any reason, we can get in touch. We can also let you know the timings of the days.

Open Weekend and Harp Recital

Over the weekend of 4 – 5 June we shall be holding our annual Open Weekend, with staff on hand to take tours and answer your questions about Sun Rising and ethical funerals. Last year we combined the Open Weekend with our Summer Nature Watch; it worked well and this year we shall be doing the same.

On Saturday 4 June in the early evening, you are invited to the first of a planned series of musical events to be held in the Roundhouse: a harp recital given by the accomplished local musician Elizabeth Gray. You are welcome to bring along a bottle of wine, a picnic, rugs or chairs to sit on, to listen to the music. We shall ask for donations, profits being given to The Friends of Sun Rising.

Wedding

On 25 June a wedding will take place at Sun Rising. Although unsure at first whether it was appropriate, we have had nothing but positive responses from families about our decision. The groom's father was buried at Sun Rising, and the couple wanted his presence for their vows. It feels a beautiful expression of Sun Rising as a place of integration, where lives are celebrated. We are happy to welcome the couple and their guests. With so many coming to the wedding, you may wish to choose another day to visit.

Nature Reserve Burial Grounds

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