

Sun Rising News

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

spring/summer 2007



Welcome to the second newsletter of Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground and Nature Reserve.

Nature Notes

Spring and early summer are the most active seasons of the year for many of our plant and animal species. The northwards surge of birds from wintering grounds around the Mediterranean and Africa reaches its peak in Britain during May, although this year we have already seen the arrival of swifts and spotted flycatchers at Sun Rising.

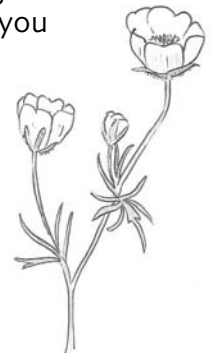
The advent of the breeding season also means that our bird population is being particularly vocal. Listen out for the blackbird, song thrush, robin, wren and chaffinch when visiting Sun Rising. You will probably hear the familiar song of the male skylark which sings continuously in the spring as he flies over his territory. There are currently skylarks nesting at Sun Rising; these once common birds are now becoming rare, due mainly to loss of habitat. Between 1969 and 1991 there was a 54% decline in skylark numbers on lowland farms in Britain, a loss of 1.6 million pairs in just 23 years (numerically, a greater loss than for any other bird species).



Remember, if you happen to find a baby bird out of its nest the best thing is to do nothing at all. In most cases the young bird has left the nest of its own accord and the parents are quite capable of looking after it. If an unfledged chick falls out of its nest, if possible return it to the nest immediately. Do not take it into care, as in nearly all cases it will die.

In March white flowers of blackthorn dominate Sun Rising's hedgerows, and in April and May the white continues with hawthorn blossom and cow parsley in the hedge bottom and buttercups across the meadow. The very dry weather we've had during April has prevented the wildflower seeds which we have sown from germinating, so it may be necessary to re-sow in the autumn when, hopefully, we will see some rain.

The exceptionally dry weather is also having an impact on our newly planted trees. It's tempting to water trees during dry weather but this can be counterproductive as the trees will tend to develop overly shallow root systems instead of reaching down to find water deeper in the earth. It's particularly important to continue watering regularly if you start, so unless you can make a regular commitment to be there with your watering can it's better not to do it at all. According to folk lore, the early appearance of leaves on the oak trees this year, well ahead of the ash, could



The Skylark's Song

*Winged voice to tell the skies of earth,
Dear earth-born lark, sing on, sing clear,
Sing into heaven that she may hear;
Sing what thou wilt, so she but know
Thine ecstasy of summer mirth,
And think "'Tis from the world below!"*

Augusta Webster (1837 - 1894)

mean the rest of the year is also set to be hot and dry.

Although there are no badger sets at Sun Rising, the worn paths and badger hair in the hedges indicate that badgers regularly visit the site and that there are sets nearby. A mammal which does appear to be breeding at Sun Rising is the hare. Unlike the rabbit, the hare is a solitary animal which lives entirely above ground. During the day the hare rests and sleeps in a form, which it makes by scraping out a shallow depression in the ground, just fitting its body when crouching low. When lying in its form with ears laid flat, the hare is well-camouflaged. Baby hares (leverets) are born fully furred and with their eyes open. After birth the mother puts each leveret in its own form and visits them once a night to suckle them. While she is away, the leverets lie low and still to avoid detection by predators. When the mother is approaching she gives them a low call and their answering calls help her to find them.

Development

Over the past six months, we have laid a number of tracks across the site. Made of local Cotswold stone, these will grass over fairly soon, leaving a stable base underfoot should the winters continue to be as wet as the last. The final track will go in over the coming month, creating a loop from the gate to the Roundhouse. All the tracks will be available only for vehicles with prior consent, such as disabled access and hearses. Once these are down, we don't anticipate putting in any more for a good five years or more.

Some of you have visited during the construction of the Roundhouse, and feedback has been positive. We hope it will be finished by the end of May.

The sedum roof has been a great success. Although we are still watering them in, the sedum plants require little water and so are

ideally suited to the dry conditions they will have to cope with during the summer months.

In the dry, they flush red, thickening again into green growth when the rain comes.



Open Day

Our next Open Day will be the official opening of the Roundhouse. This will be on **Saturday 16 June**. All are welcome. There will be refreshments on hand, and an opportunity to see the Roundhouse complete.

Managing the Grassland

It is important that we manage the areas of Sun Rising that are not currently used for burial. This year they are managed by a local farmer in Tysoe. He will take a cut of hay from the field, and then put in a flock of sheep for grazing, secured away from the burial areas with electric fencing. We would appreciate your feedback.

Bulb and Tree Planting

In the autumn we shall send out a note inviting you to help with our bulb planting day. This is when we shall be putting in wild daffodils and bluebells in the areas already under the canopy of the hedgerow trees. Later in the year,

depending on the weather, we'll also have another tree planting day, to which you are all invited. As well as planting memorial trees, we shall replace any trees and hedging that haven't made it through the summer, and be extending areas of hedgerow.

Very many blessings!

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