

Greetings to our local A Rocha friends. We hope you are enjoying the glories of springtime!

Dorset Schools Eco Summit, Bryanston School, March 2010

Dave Higgins writes: The Schools' Eco Summit was inaugurated last year by The Yarrells School, and this year's event grew excitingly in scale and breadth of the presentations on offer. Small groups attended from a wide range of schools, making up 350 adult and child delegates in all. Top of the bill were discussions led by Dick Strawbridge of TV fame and Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition Towns movement, but also on offer were demonstrations of straw-bale building, renewable energy options, a greenhouse made of re-used plastic bottles, a biomass waste digester, displays of sustainability projects from various schools, and lots more besides. It was great to see such enthusiasm and growing momentum for more sustainable living amongst the young and the leaderships of the schools they represented. And at this rate of growth, next year's summit could be huge!

Local group event



Sunshine and blue skies enhanced the local group visit on 17 April to two Christchurch nature reserves. Stanpit Marsh (left) on the north side of the harbour is an SSSI comprising 65 hectares of salt and freshwater marshes, creeks, salt pans, reed beds, gravel estuarine banks and sandy scrub – a rich and rare combination of habitats. Steamer Point



(right) is a 24-acre cliff-top site with woodland and aquatic habitats which support a wide variety of flora and fauna. Aply guided by wardens in both locations, we learned much about the conservation challenges these reserves face, and the invaluable work done by regular volunteers, including Andrew & Angela Walker, who organised the event. Those of us to whom these reserves were new have vowed to return soon!

John's slot

After the coldest winter for 30 years, we are now in a long dry spell with cold north-east winds. The sun is nice but low night temperatures are not warming up the soil much. I find the Met Office site is great for a forecast www.metoffice.gov.uk, and if you are in East Dorset, the Poole Harbour nowcast is well worth a look www.pooleharbourweather.com. (For those in the west, the Weymouth website is under construction, they tell us.) Some information is easier to find: a glance out of the window, a look at the sky, and a step outside usually give us enough to be going on with. Gardening has to move at the pace of the weather, so a slow start as the ground is still cold – so are the gardeners – but this will soon change. Some crops are doing well even now, with autumn planted onions and garlic looking as if they will be ready in a few weeks' time. Must go and do a bit of watering, with a can, not a hose ...

What's on?

Local group events

Saturday 19 June – Half-day flower walk on chalk-land in north Dorset led by local A Rocha Friend and botanical expert Pam Marchant. Meet at Child Okeford parish church at 1.45pm (OS ref. 835127). Bring strong footwear and, if you have them, a wild flower book and a hand lens. NB Steep ascent up Hambledon Hill! Further info from Pam on 01425 673992.

Saturday 25 September, 9.30am-12.30pm – 'Wet and wild' morning at Longham Lakes, Ferndown, led by Dominic Couzens, local A Rocha Friend, writer and broadcaster on wildlife and natural history. Family-friendly event ideal for 5-11's: pond-dipping, mammal-trapping, birding, moths and butterflies. Small charge (£3 per adult) to cover costs. Contact Dominic by September 1st to book (01202 874330 or dominic.couzens@btinternet.com) Find out more about Dominic on www.birdwords.co.uk

And also happening locally...

Wimborne St Michael's Church, Colehill (BH21 7AB) **Bat Evening** on **Saturday 22 May**, 7:15 for 7:30pm, organised by Dorset Wildlife Trust through the Living Churchyards Scheme. Introductory talk and Bat Quiz followed by some local fieldwork with bat detectors. Light refreshments (at start). A Rocha supporters most welcome. Contact John or Jenny Spatchet, 01202 886688, sp@emikez.com by 20 May.

Holton Lee (BH16 6JN, between Poole & Wareham) **Open Day & Summer Fair** on **Saturday 5 June**, 11am-5pm. More info: 01202 625562; www.holtonlee.co.uk

Purbeck Aware 'Festival' Lots of nature-friendly events, **15 May–13 June**. See www.purbeck.gov.uk

Hilfield Friary (DT27 7BE, near Cerne Abbas) **23-25 July: Caring for Creation in a World of Crisis**
A weekend exploring the links between peace and the environment from a Christian perspective. Details from 01300 341741 or www.hilfieldproject.co.uk

A Rocha (Wessex Region) Churches Conference Advance notice! Put the date in your diary (**Saturday 16 October**) & plan to take your church leader to find out more about the Partner Churches scheme and Eco-congregation. Details to follow.

The 'wild West'

A somewhat easterly bias in our local region's news and events so far has been detected by group member Pam Marchant! She points out that west Dorset also has much to offer and has sent some suggestions for places to explore.

Kingcombe Meadows (SY554990) – **DWT Reserve**. Spectacular flowers early summer (June) – car park, information centre. Next to the reserve is **the Kingcombe Centre** which offers courses, holidays and walks in Dorset. Brochure available from centre, and www.kingcombecentre.org.uk.

Powerstock Common (SY546974) – **DWT Reserve**. Wide variety of habitats; good for butterflies.

Ferne Animal Sanctuary Turn off A40 just beyond Chard (waymarked). 51 acres with an amazing variety of domestic and farm animals, superbly cared for. Car park, picnic site and facilities. Educational nature trail. **Good 'all age' visit.** www.ferneanimalsanctuary.org.

Cycle for your supper?

A Danish hotel is offering a free meal to any guest who's able to produce electricity for the hotel on an exercise bike attached to a generator – getting fit and reducing their carbon footprint in the process! Guests at The Crowne Plaza in Copenhagen will have to produce at least 10 watt-hours of electricity – roughly 15 minutes' cycling for someone of average fitness – and will then be given meal vouchers worth 26 euros (£23). The plan, a world-first, was launched on 19 April and will run for a year and, if successful, will be extended to all Crowne Plaza hotels in the UK! Watch this space...

Jottings

Recycle for Dorset Their new blog will contain details of recycling across the county – visit <http://recyclefordorset.wordpress.com> to find out more.

Wildlife Monitoring If you're interested in monitoring wildlife, **Moors Valley Country Park** would love to hear from you! www.moors-valley.co.uk and click on 'Conservation and Wildlife'. Furthermore, **Green Trucks** from East Dorset's Countryside Management Service, based at Moors Valley, now run on biodiesel. Other sustainable measures there include a rainwater collection system, solar panels and composting.

And finally...

Do let John & Jane (jandjcribb@btinternet.com; 01202 883307) know about any relevant local events/website links/book or film recommendations/recycling or grow-your-own tips...

Please contact David & Jean Morgan (david.morgan@arocha.org, 01202 883504) if:

- you would like any more information about the Dorset/West Hants local group;
- you would like to get your church interested in A Rocha/Christians and the environment;
- you don't wish to receive local group info in future.

More local group information is also available at:

<http://www.arocha.org/gb-en/makeadifference/community/1464-DSY/6614-DSY.html>.



Don't forget Cherishing Churchyards Week,
Friday 18–Sunday 27 June!

See www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk for logos and tip sheets.