

## Welcoming Nature



As sunshine at last returns, we're looking forward to spring **blossom in the hedgerow and orchard** and birdsong and bees visiting flowers in the **rain garden and meadow**. Over winter we've focussed on ways to make the grounds of the Downs Leisure Centre more **hospitable to wildlife**.



In November, people of all ages took part in our workshop on **building bird boxes**. Thank you to Wave, to all our volunteers - especially Tony for cutting and drilling the wood and everyone who donated a bird box to the site here - we hope you all enjoyed Gemma's scrumptious **apple crumble**!

We planted a hedge of **Hazel whips** in December by the overspill car park with the prospect of hazel nuts providing food for wildlife in future years.

**Yellow Rattle** was sown in the meadow orchard, and **bluebell, crocus and grape hyacinth bulbs** were planted for early nectar to help bumble bees and insects as they emerge hungrily from winter hibernation. In February, **native snowdrops**, kindly donated by a nearby resident and planted in 2022 made their first appearance beneath the trees behind the all-weather pitch.

*'Nature does not hurry yet everything is accomplished.'*  
Lao Tzu



Throughout summer, Paul Wiggins from Brighton Permaculture Trust shared a depth of knowledge and skill on caring for **fruit trees** in the **community orchard** and earlier in the year leader of Lewes District Council, Zoe Nicholson cut the ribbon at the opening of our **Rain Garden** – a first in the district for capturing rainwater from council buildings!

## Plans for 2025

There are exciting plans for improving the grounds for visitors and our community and for enriching areas for wildlife. This month will see the creation of a **Butterfly border** in the sheltered garden behind the Sutton community barn in a collaboration with South Downs National Park and Gardening in Action. We're grateful to Lewes District Council for support given in preparing the ground for this and other initiatives around the site. We will continue to expand the **rain garden** near the picnic tables and start planting to turn the chain link fence behind the goal post into a **fedge** - a wildlife-friendly green wall. We're in the early stages of planning a **nature trail** and **path** through the meadow to enable everyone to access and enjoy, a circuit around the grounds in all seasons.



All this planning really helped us through the gloom of winter – and we're looking forward now to working with people in our community, to meet and make new friends, learning together and in the months ahead, turning our neighbourhood into a greener place to live, work and play! **Friends of Sutton Downs warmly invites anyone who wants to join us to please get in touch by emailing us at [friendsofsuttondowns@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofsuttondowns@gmail.com)**

Help plant a tiered **Butterfly Border** and learn how to attract wildlife to your garden in a **FREE** workshop with Dan Ori,

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 10am-3pm, in the garden at the Downs Leisure Centre.**



To book your place email [OVCAtraining@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:OVCAtraining@southdowns.gov.uk)

### OVER 35 TREES PLANTED

Thanks to our volunteers and partner groups, Trees for Seaford and Brighton Permaculture Trust, Friends of Sutton Downs have planted over 35 trees giving beauty and shade around the recreation grounds, sanctuary to wildlife, and a promise in future years of free organic fruit – apples, pears, cherries, plums and mulberries in the community orchard.

