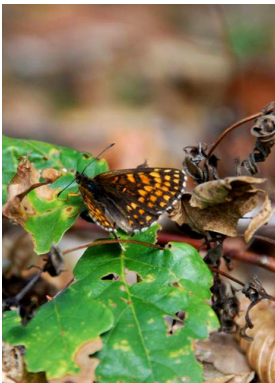


Special points of interest:

- *Heath Fritillary Butterfly in the Blean*
- *Education in the Woods*
- *Livestock grazing & browsing on Blean Reserves*
- *Volunteer Trainee Wardens' thoughts*
- *Future Events to look out for*



Blean Reserves Transformed

Areas of Kent Wildlife Trust's Blean Reserves have been transformed over the past few months.

Large scale work has been carried out by contractors, clearing and thinning areas of dense conifer growth, letting in light and allowing the native flora to regenerate.

Volunteers have been working hard in the woods on areas that are not accessible to large machinery, carrying out coppicing, clearance and burning and creating a varied landscape with different habitats to encourage a wider range of wildlife.

Key species that the project aims to benefit include the Heath Fritillary Butterfly (pictured, left), the Dormouse and the Nightingale.

The Heath Fritillary is a very rare butterfly found in only four areas in the UK, one of which is the Blean. It is also known as the Woodman's Follower due to its liking for recently cleared and coppiced areas of woodland where its main food plant - cow wheat - can be found. June is the best time to see this lovely little butterfly.

The dormouse is another creature that benefits from coppicing, with its favourite habitat being hazel coppice. It is a very sleepy animal, taking fifteen minutes to wake up. Also, the dormouse needs to come out of hibernation in order to have a sleep before returning to hibernation!

This is the ideal time to hear



Blean volunteers in East Blean Wood, Christmas 2009

nightingales singing in the woods, in the day as well as at night. The nightingale is a secretive bird, preferring to stay well hidden in dense coppice regrowth, making it more likely to hear its song than to spot the bird.

So, get out into the woods and experience the wildlife wonders on your doorstep!

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The Outdoor Classroom

The Blean Project is working with schools, colleges and universities to provide learning opportunities in the outdoor classroom.

Primary schools in the area are being offered the chance to partake in woodland workshops, with a pilot project to

take place in June.

The Community Engagement Officer has also been visiting schools to tell them about the Blean Reserves and providing workshops for pupils, making bird feeders and solitary bee homes.

University and college stu-

dents joined volunteer groups, learning new skills and gaining practical experience, which will help them in the job market. The University of Kent's Conservation Society worked on a Birdbox project, putting up 40 birdboxes around the campus for National Birdbox Week.



Highland Cattle (above), Konik Ponies (below) and goats are grazing and browsing the Trust's Blean Reserves.



Why are cattle and ponies grazing in the Blean reserves?

Konik ponies and Highland cattle are grazing and browsing on the Trust's Blean reserves to help restore natural habitats, particularly following clearance of alien species such as Corsican Pine, Norway Spruce and Western Hemlock.

After the conifers are harvested, the brush is raked up and burned and nature takes over the bare ground. Usually, a few trees and shrubs are established amongst the conifers, but otherwise, plants grow from seed already in the ground.

Often, Birch trees appear and can blanket extensive areas. Over several decades, and in the absence of natural grazing, fires or other major disturbances, Birch thickets develop into mixed woodland, with Oak trees growing up amongst the ageing pioneer trees to form high forest. Natural woodland, however, is rarely undisturbed which results in open areas and a wide variety of tree species of varied age.

In the absence of truly wild large herbivorous animals, Kent Wildlife Trust has hardy

ponies and cattle roaming through parts of its Blean reserves to recreate more naturally varied woodland, with patches of Heather, open wet areas and ponds amongst the regenerating trees and shrubs. Animals will be moved around to make sure that trees can develop, but keeping glades and heathy areas open.

And besides, the Koniks and Highlands are very attractive in their own right and a wonderful addition to the woodland landscape!

“Sometimes I feel that I have learned more of value in the last 6 months than I have during nearly 5 years at college!”

Blean Volunteer Trainee Wardens

“As Volunteer Trainee Warden in the Blean, I have learned many certificated skills, including chainsaw, brushcutter and first aid, which allow me to carry out conservation projects within the Blean and will be invaluable when I look for full time employment.

I am constantly learning from the expertise of fellow wardens and volunteers. My wildlife

identification skills have really improved. Sometimes I feel that I have learned more of value in the last 6 months than I have during nearly 5 years at college!

Overall, I find it so enjoyable and take pleasure in all aspects of the job; the wildlife, the people and the outdoor activity.”

Karen Rose

“Everything I have learnt about woodland conservation, through working with the wardens, is essential for my future career.

Skills, such as chainsaw and brushcutter, are giving me the confidence to take the next step to become a warden.”

Mano Suzuki

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 15th May, 9pm-midnight
 National Moth Night
 West Blean & Thornden Woods

Sunday 16th May, 9.30-11am
 Morning After National Moth Night
 West Blean & Thornden Woods

Sunday 30th May, 10am-midday
 The Ever Changing Woods
 West Blean & Thornden Woods

Sunday 20th June, 2-4pm
 Jewels of the Wood
 West Blean & Thornden Woods

Sunday 25th June, Night Walk
 Crepuscular Encounter
 Venue & Time TBC

Sunday 1st August, 10am-midday
 Grazing Animals in the Blean
 West Blean & Thornden Woods

Discover Bigbury
 Saturday 24th July, 10am-4pm
 Bigbury Camp Iron Age Hillfort
 Archaeology tours & talks, displays

Blean Woodlands Festival
 Saturday 11th September, 10am-4pm
 Strode Park Grounds, Herne
 Demonstrations, talks, stalls, entertainment

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