



# Oakley Woodlands Group

## Newsletter No. 58 June 2011



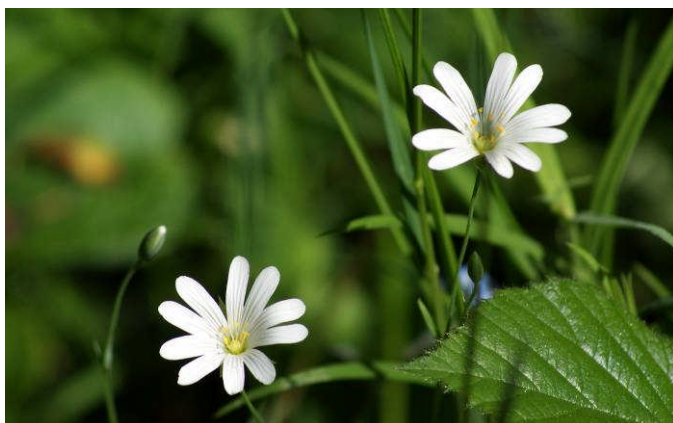
What an amazing spring! April 2011 was the hottest on record with practically no rain at all. Our newly restored rides and glades were overwhelmed with the scent and colour of bluebells. Insects and wild flowers thrived in the brilliant sunshine. Here are just a few images from our glorious copses:



*The main ride in Cowdown 1<sup>st</sup> May 2011*



*Can you identify these extraordinary insects?*



*Greater Stitchwort in St. John's*

### SPRING EVENTS 2011

#### HWWT 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event - Eastrop Park

In 1997, when the OWG was formed, much of the training and help we received was provided by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, for which we will always be grateful.

This year the HWWT celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a series of events across the county. We were delighted to take part in the Basingstoke event by putting on a display in Eastrop Park on the 7<sup>th</sup> May.



*The OWG display in Eastrop Park 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011*

#### Wood Sales Day 14<sup>th</sup> May

What a surprise! Our first ever Wood Sales Day in St. John's Copse exceeded our expectations.

"It was all a bit chaotic. We were accosted as soon as we arrived in the woods, twenty minutes ahead of the start time. Most of the beanpoles had to be made on the day to meet demand." said Alan Merry, Chairman of the OWG.

A massive "thank you" to everyone who helped make the event so successful and an even bigger "thank you" to all those people who came along and bought our woodland products.

Sales on the day and pre-sales came to £135. This will be a huge help in supporting the conservation work in our two copses. We will see if we can repeat the event next year.

## FORAGING FOR FUNGI

We have over 5000 varieties of mushrooms in the UK, of which 90% are harmless. Some are considered to be gastronomic stars, like ceps, chanterelles and morelles.

But a few, like death cap and destroying angel contain a cocktail of toxins that make them deadly poisonous. And many others are either inedible or can cause severe stomach or digestive upsets.

The problem is that most of us have no idea which mushrooms are edible and which are not.



*Delicious or deadly?* Cowdown Copse 2010

Last year, several celebrity chefs were encouraging the British to make the most of nature's "free larder". In Epping Forest, where permits are required to pick mushrooms, Rangers stopped over 150 people in a single weekend.

By September 2010 the National Poisons Information Service had received 209 enquiries from accident and emergency wards about mushroom poisoning. Very occasionally people die, such as the lady in Ventnor, Isle of Wight in 2008, who had eaten death caps.

We have an enormous variety of fungi in our woods and some look very tempting to pick and eat. **But, unless you know exactly what you are doing (and even if you do), we urge you to leave them alone.** They are all part of the biodiversity that we are trying to protect in Oakley's woods.

And in case you do think you know what's safe and what isn't, here is a cautionary word .....

In 1944 a German mycologist (fungus biologist), Dr Julius Schäffer died after eating brown roll rims (*paxillus involutus*). These mushrooms looked normal and were once commonly eaten.

Guide books now classify brown roll rim mushrooms as poisonous!

## DIARY DATES

### Charcoal Burning – Cowdown Copse 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> August 2011

Every year we convert some of the waste hazel produced during coppicing into charcoal which is sold to raise funds to support the work of the OWG.

A week of charcoal burning can yield 80 to 90 bags of high quality BBQ charcoal. It is a very important and eco-friendly activity for the Group.

If you're interested in seeing how we make charcoal, or would like to get involved in making it, give David Breeze a call on 780814 and he will provide you with further information.

### "Walk in the Woods" Planning Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> August 2011

The OWG works to a management plan. This plan was originally produced by the Borough in the mid 1990's. Each August, we tour both copses and put together the following winter's work schedule.

This "Walk in the Woods" meeting ensures that we achieve the original and evolving conservation objectives. This year's plan will include the felling of a small number of oak trees which will reduce overcrowding and pave the way for the replanting of new, healthy and young oak trees.

### Work Party Dates Autumn 2011

These will appear in the September "Newsletter"

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The Newsletter is produced by the OWG quarterly with the next issue appearing in **SEPTEMBER 2011.**

*p.s. Please let me know if you can identify the insects shown on page 1. Barry*

**The Oakley Woodlands  
Group is.....**



Assisted by  
**Basingstoke  
and Deane**