

Quantock Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



20th April 2020

Covid 19 Lockdown – Issue 1



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Time for Yellow

By Andy Stevenson, Quantock Hills Ranger

After the cold and dark winter months, the first glimpses of life emerge in the form of snowdrops before the amazing explosion of yellow flowers come out. Originally a wildflower found in woodlands, hedgerows and grasslands the primrose is now common in parks and gardens across the country and is regularly voted one of the nations' favourite flowers. Its name derives from the Latin 'Prima rosa' which means 'first rose' of the year. It has been hybridised and cultivated and now comes in many more colours and shapes. It is very easy to overlook this plant but because it is so common people can find it wherever they live. Therefore take time to get down to its level and have a closer look.

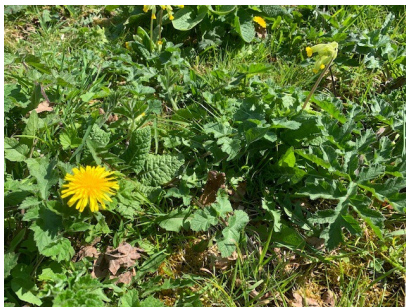
The flowers come in a variety of shades of yellow and provide a nectar source for early butterflies such as the brimstone and small tortoiseshell. They have a beautiful subtle scent and the leaves are wrinkly with hairy undersides.

Primroses were used to prepare magic potions in the Middle Ages and have been linked to the treatment of gout and rheumatism in the past. On a more cheerful note, they are said to symbolise youth and innocence.





'Primrose day' is celebrated on April 19th as this the anniversary of the death of the former British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and the primrose was his favourite flower. Queen Victoria supposedly sent him bunches regularly and to this day primroses are laid at his statue by Westminster Abbey on this date every year.



If you are keen to find out more I would recommend the book *Flora Britannica* by Richard Mabey – it gives details of all of the native flowers and trees as well as much of the associated folklore. Alternatively you could go back over our Facebook posts from this time last year when I posted a photo and description of a different wildflower each day during April.

Other yellow flowers at this time of year are daffodils, lesser celandine, cowslip, marsh marigold and dandelion.

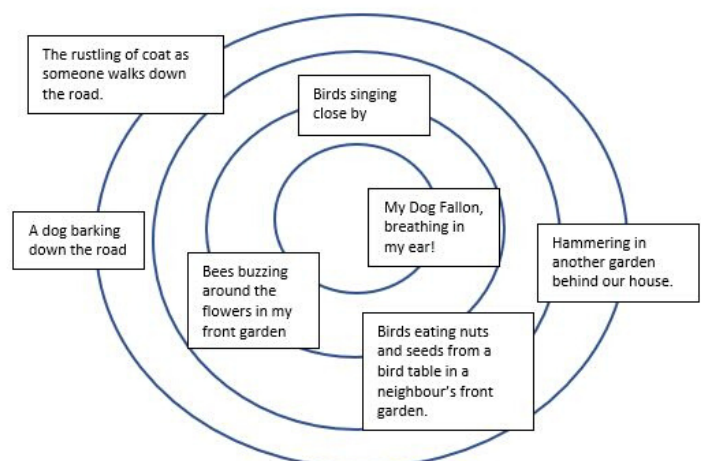
'Back Garden' Bathing

By Kristen Lambert, Nature & Wellbeing Officer

Most of us won't be lucky enough to live within walking distance of forests and woodland areas, but that doesn't mean we can't practice some of the techniques used in 'Shirin Yoko' or 'Forest Bathing'. Why not take a moment when you are in your garden or on your daily walk, cycle or run to become more aware about what you can see, hear and smell?

Sounds:

- Find a comfy spot in your garden – under a tree perhaps or take a cushion out and sit on the ground. Don't worry if you don't have a garden – just make a conscious decision while taking your daily exercise from home to focus your mind on a particular thought/activity.
- Try and just focus on what you can hear – it may be birds, cars, bees, the wind through the trees, people talking, even traffic.
- Why not make a note of what you can hear (either there and then if in your garden or when you get home if out and about), plotting what is/was closest to you and what you can/could hear in the distance – also think about the direction the sound is coming from. Just give yourself a few minutes or as long as you want to really listen. Here is my attempt while sitting on my front step!



Quantock Quiz - Wildlife

(Answers on the back page)

1) One of the AONB Rangers, a long time ago, tried to appear clever by using the Latin name for a Buzzard, which is Buteo buteo, when giving a talk. Unfortunately, he got it wrong! Instead he said 'Bufo bufo'. What animal did the Ranger say would be flying over the Quantock Hills?

- a. Toad
- b. Fox
- c. Slow worm

2) Which is the largest species of Deer in the UK?

- a. Red Deer
- b. Fallow Deer
- c. Roe Deer

3) There are 17 species of bat which live and breed in the UK. How many of them can be found in the Quantock Hills?

- a. 17
- b. 13
- c. 5

4) Amethyst Deceiver, Blushing Dapperling and Mealy Bonnet are all found on the Quantock Hills. But what are they?

- a. Butterflies and moths
- b. Plants and flowers
- c. Mushrooms and toadstools

5) What do the Nightjar, Tawny Owl and Woodcock have what in common?

- a. They all have a large beak
- b. They all eat insects
- c. They are all nocturnal
(mainly active during the night)



6) Ramscombe in Great Wood is a Forestry England site that is great to visit. It also has some marvellous tall trees. Some of the Douglas Fir tree's can measure how high?

- a. 50m
- b. 30m
- c. 10m

7) Buff-tailed, Red-tailed and White-tailed are all types of what?

- a. Birds
- b. Bumblebees
- c. Butterflies

8) Wood ants are amazing insects, able to lift 100 times their own weight and relative to their size having the largest brains of any insects. You can find their nests as mounds of sticks, broken leaves in many of the Quantock woodland. What else is amazing about the wood ant?

- a. They can spray formic acid in defence of their nest
- b. They can jump 130 times their height
- c. Workers can live for up to 20 years

9) The AONB Service have a herd of ponies grazing on Cothelstone Hill. These are a native pony breed but what are they?

- a. Exmoor Ponies
- b. Dartmoor Ponies
- c. Blackdown Ponies

10) Sessile oak are the main species of tree in the northern combes of the Quantock Hills. They are one of the most valuable native tree species for other wildlife. Do you know many species of wildlife are only found living on oak trees?

- a. 56
- b. 156
- c. 326

The Common Land Register

By Bill Jenman

Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme Manager

While we've all been holed up at home, I've been doing a bit of work on the Common Land Register for Quantock Common (CL10). Common Land is land owned by one person over which certain specified other people have certain specified rights – it's not a free-for-all as is sometimes supposed. The Commons Registration Act 1965 required local authorities to compile and maintain a legally definitive record of all Common Land and who held what rights over it.

The hand-written Register is a fascinating bit of social history, recording a time when the old pre-war smallholding and cottage subsistence economy was fading from memory. There were 88 recorded holders of rights for CL10 (some are multiple entries for the same holder). Of these "pannage" – the 5 rights to turn out pigs to eat acorns – is a good snapshot. 3 holders are houses without other livestock; these are records of the household pig once commonly kept by people living largely outside the cash economy.



Similarly, there are 30 rights of "estovers" – basically the right to collect firewood, and 22 for "turbary" – the right to cut turf for fuel. 7 are for cutting bracken, used for bedding and for burning to make potash for fertiliser and to make soap. I bet some of these households without livestock were soap makers, literally a cottage industry.

There are rights totalling about 200 cattle and ponies plus over 4500 sheep (exchangeable for cows or ponies at 4:1). That's an awful lot of grazing on about 4400 acres (~1800ha) – the numbers are mostly associated with farms, but some smaller claims for 4 – 30 sheep are just houses. I suspect that where these essentially domestic rights are still in use it will mostly be in the form of pony grazing. The extra 50 goats for a house in Holford are a nice touch too; I wonder if that household made goats' cheese?

Grazing by Commoners has been a critical part of the local economy since before Medieval times and remains crucial to the management of the open Common today. The AONB therefore works closely with the Commoner's Association and with individual graziers, but it's nice to explore the history of how the Common and its rights evolved. Most of the people who registered rights back in the 1960s will have passed away by now, but many of the family names are still important Quantock farmers. In rather troubled times, I find the sense of continuity and deep historical roots recorded in the 50 year-old Register immensely reassuring.

Looking to the future

By Owen Jones

Quantock Hills AONB & Forestry England Partnership Ranger

We all need a good news story at the moment and although not from our home shores this article shows that as humans we can help. The human race has ultimately been the cause for the near extinction of this rhino but we could also be the helpers too. The article looks at the problems facing the Northern White Rhino and how a bit of scientist thinking, invention and luck is helping with a glimmer of hope.



Photo's by Getty Images

For more information and the full report visit:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-52228181>

Quantock Word Search

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D	V	T	B	L	U	E	B	E	L	L	S	C	U	Y	F	C	O
U	B	D	E	A	D	W	O	M	A	N	S	D	I	T	C	H	B
Y	H	N	A	I	G	S	A	B	C	D	T	S	W	L	U	Q	E
G	Y	S	H	Y	F	N	I	O	K	S	Z	G	O	R	S	E	A
L	Y	D	E	A	R	D	H	I	L	L	P	O	N	I	E	S	C
G	G	R	E	A	T	B	E	A	R	C	C	Y	Y	Q	E	B	O
F	V	C	Z	F	Y	N	E	C	O	U	R	T	Z	A	M	M	N
Q	C	O	T	H	E	L	S	T	O	N	E	H	I	L	L	F	H
V	C	J	W	A	L	F	O	R	D	S	G	I	B	B	E	T	I
E	F	X	R	A	N	G	E	R	S	I	Z	H	F	G	S	F	L
D	Z	S	E	V	E	N	S	I	S	T	E	R	S	T	K	J	L
Y	S	Q	U	A	N	T	O	C	K	H	I	L	L	S	Q	A	P

Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden → ↓ and ↘.

BEACONHILL	GORSE	RANGERS
BLUEBELLS	GREATBEAR	SEVENSISTERS
COTHELSTONEHILL	LYDEARDHILL	WALFORDSGIBBET
DEADWOMANS DITCH	PONIES	
FYNECOURT	QUANTOCKHILLS	

Quantock Wildlife Quiz Answers

- 1a) Toad, 2a) Red Deer, 3b) 13, 4c) Mushrooms and Toadstools, 5c) They are all nocturnal

6a) 50m, 7b) Bumblebees, 8a) They can spray formic acid in defence of their nest,

9a) Exmoor Ponies, 10c) 326

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Website

www.quantockhills.com



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