About
The Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster helps farmers, foresters and other land managers work together to improve farm profitability and benefit soil, water, wildlife and historic features not just on their individual farms, but across the area. It has 58 members covering over 3,500ha. The Cluster is helped by the High Weald AONB Partnership with financial support from Natural England’s Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund, the Environment Agency (Giant Hogweed control), and the Woodland Trust (deer management). Visit the Upper Rother & Dudwell Farm Cluster page at www.highweald.org

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Return of the Barn Owl - continued...

- Erect a well-designed, well-positioned barn owl nest box, not too close to a road, see: www.gardenature.co.uk
- Switch to safer rodent control, see the Barn Owl Trust’s recommendations.
- Create owl hunting grounds - leave strips or patches of rough, tussocky grassland at least 4m wide, with a litter layer of dead grass, at least 7cm deep.
- Work with neighbours on managing land for barn owl hunting - in mixed farm landscapes, they need up to 25 hectares of rough grass within 2km of a suitable nest site. That’s about 43km of rough grass field margin.

If you don’t have a barn owl nest box on your land and would like one, please get in touch, as we may be able to supply one at reduced cost or for free.

For more on managing your land for barn owls, see: www.barnowltrust.org.uk

Member news
Welcome to new members Neil & Lorraine of Bungehurst Farm & Alex of Moat Farm.

Farm Cluster Summer BBQ bash, 24 July: Ross would like as many members as possible to get together for our Farm Cluster BBQ social. It’d be fantastic for everyone to meet each other at the beautiful, historic Froghole Farm. We’ll discuss what barn owls need to thrive here - we may even see one. Booking details below...

Free Farm Cluster events

- 15 July, 2-5pm: Green-haying your meadows. Willingford Farm, Burwash Common. Walk and practical chat with Keith Datchler on using green hay to restore species-rich meadows. Limited spaces, email Ross if you’re interested.
- 24 July, 6-8pm: Farm Cluster Summer BBQ. Froghole Farm, Mayfield. A great opportunity to meet up with other Farm Cluster members and eat and drink some local produce on a lovely High Weald farm. Book on Eventbrite.

To book for the above events, follow the Eventbrite link where available, or contact Sam on 01424 723011, or samantha.nicholas@highweald.org

Other events


I-Spy this month

**Shrews:** You’re more likely to hear a shrew defending its territory with high-pitched squeaks than to see one. With tiny eyes, small ears and long, pointed snout, they sniffle through leaf litter or long vegetation on a constant search for prey - insects, spiders, woodlice and worms. If they don’t eat every few hours, they die.

The common shrew is some 6cm long and the tinier pygmy shrew is one of Britain’s smallest mammals. The larger, less common water shrew is semi-aquatic and sensitive to pollutants and pesticides in water.

Common shrews live in thick, tussocky grass, woodland and hedgerows. A litter layer in the grass provides cover for them to make tunnels and nests, as well as for field voles and wood mice - which together make up the majority of barn owls' prey.