Happy New Year!

We have a menagerie of animals at the farm now and our newest addition are the goats. They are mischievous trouble causers but their charisma makes them worth their while. They go by the names of Floppy, Greedy, Mrs and Bob.

We still have our flock of chickens, 3 pigs and 40 sheep which are roaming the site until the Spring when they will go onto Dartmoor to graze. We will also be welcoming a herd of cows back onto the farm in early April and they will be with us until late October to aid in our conservation grazing of the site as well as being a favourite with the school children and volunteers.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No it’s the dreaded cold snap that is inevitably heading our way. But fear not, there’s only 2 months until spring so let’s enjoy the cold season and everything it has to offer. We have already spotted many animals this year at the farm from deer, badgers and foxes to buzzards, pheasants and a stray cat from the estate.

We have so much planned for this coming year so keep your eyes and ears peeled for everything that’s happening at the farm in 2019!
Volunteers

A volunteer is for life not just for Christmas, and thankfully they have rejoined us for the new year. Fresh and revitalised from their Christmas turkey (some vegetarian) they have planted a family of trees in the soon to be beaver occupied woods below the farm. We planted a huge variety of species which have been immensely protected from deer destruction. The day was surprisingly sunny with one volunteer contemplating sun cream.

In the final months of 2018 our volunteers, including the University of Plymouth student volunteering group undertook many important activities around the farm which will hopefully enhance the already rich wildlife value of the site. A large slope behind the farm was planted up with trees and will be dedicated to becoming a wooded pasture and we planted a large hedgerow through one of our livestock fields. They also cleared and renovated the pond which has seen kingfishers, herons and a newt since it was opened up! Also they have been busy fencing, stonewalling, wood chopping, pig moving and goat taming to name a few things.

We are always looking to welcome new members so please get in touch!

Community Forum

The most recent Poole Farm Community Forum provided local people with a chance to meet some of our partners on the project and share tales of the local history. Dave Cole provided an insight into the realities of sheep farming in Devon and how he is working with the Community park team to manage the grassland habitats on site for wildlife value. Peter Horswell who farmed from Poole Farm for 40 years until 2015 provided some interesting stories about his experience of farming the land through the years and changing times for agriculture. Duchy College updated the forum on their plans to provide more full time courses for students in September 2019 and the successes of the students who have already been learning at Poole Farm.

Many thanks to all those who attended and made the 2 hours a really vibrant event. The next Community Forum will be held on 21st March 2019 at Poole Farm. More details will follow in the new year but please let us know if there is a specific part of the project you would like to hear about.

Chris Avent
We have been busy as beavers this month. Twig by twig things have been falling into place. Last month we had exciting news, with 3 new Local Nature Reserves being officially designated in the city. We plan to reintroduce a pair of beavers to Seaton and Lower Bircham Local Nature Reserve late next year!

We have recently submitted a license application to Natural England – this is basically a plan of how we plan to safely and securely reintroduce the beavers onto our site and to ensure they don’t escape. For the application we have been busy mapping the area, planning site infrastructure like fencing, location of a potential visitor centre and thinking about how we will manage and maintain the enclosure.

A large part of the work will involve monitoring the impact of beavers. Our project represents a unique opportunity nationally to study the impact of beavers in an urban context and to engage urban communities in this process. To show the impacts we have been busily building up a baseline monitoring biodiversity, water quality, water flow and other key indicators. In the coming year we will be working with a PhD student to carry out consultation and gauge public perceptions of beavers.

We have been working with lots of different partners as part of the Plymouth Beaver Project Board and the broad range of skills and experience has been crucial in allowing us to progress the project. Last months meeting allowed us to get out on site and get feedback and ideas on proposals – it was a very exciting meeting!

Kieran Shaw-Flach

**Chickens**

We have extended our flock by 6 hens! Our Black Copper Marans are now in retirement and with the large coop and run we felt it was time for some newcomers. All the new hens are hybrids making them hardy against illness and are good egg layers. These new ladies are at point of lay and so should start laying their first eggs very soon. The new breeds are as follows – White Sussex (Delilah), Speckled Maran (Buzzard), Blue Maran (Silvia), Columbian Black Tail (Elsie), White Leghorn (Wilma) & a Lohmann Brown (Betty) - all named by staff and volunteers. They have settled into free ranging life at the farm well and come running when they see the team or visiting schools

Lianne Gore
New Partnership - In September Poole Farm partnered up with local school, Mount Tamar. Each term a new cohort of students will participate in farm activities on a weekly basis. This new programme is designed to provide the students with new experiences and help them to develop a variety of skills. Some of the activities have included scarecrow making, herding chickens, creating animal enrichment, litter picking and stone wall restoration. Last term’s cohort saw the students grow in their team working abilities, animal handling and communication.

Brooke Green – We enjoyed welcoming back Brooke Green to the farm in November. 20 students arrived to help plant a new hedgerow in the adjacent field to our pond. The hedgerow was planted up with young trees including Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Rowan & Hazel. After a quick demonstration and talk about the importance of hedgerows, the students got to work and planted over 130 trees! The students worked

Bees

Another season over and our bees are now safely clustered deep in their hives, overwintering until the weather warms again in early spring and a new season begins.

In winter, the colony has shrunk in size, as most of the summer worker bees and the male drone bees will have died off, and it is then looked after by ‘winter bees’. These are bees hatched in late summer, that are fatter, have stronger immune systems and a longer life span than the summer bees. The winter bees spend all their life inside the hive, looking after the queen, helping to regulate the temperature of the colony and looking after the brood of bees that will inherit the colony in spring, when the winter bees have finally fulfilled their mission of bringing the colony safely through the winter.

This year has been hard for our bees, with the Beast from the East delaying spring and then the hot, dry, rainless months that quickly followed. Forage was scarce and they quickly consumed everything they brought in. We found we needed to feed them more at the end of the season than usual, to ensure they had enough food stores to last them through winter and it also meant we only took a tiny amount of honey from them this year - as there was barely any excess.

A huge thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who worked hard in the apiary this year, learning alongside me. Beekeeping is a never-ending journey of discovery and each year brings new challenges and surprises!

Lily Urbanska
Volunteer Profile Gemma

I have now been at the farm for just over year and love it every second of it. Every week is different and I just can’t wait to get there in the morning because my first duty of the day is to see to all the animals. The reason I started to volunteer was I lost my purpose after being diagnosed with heart failure, then losing my mum and I finally gave into my Doctors pleas to give up work and my world was turned upside down. Needless to say my physical and mental health was at an all time low and I wasn’t the same person that I was before I was diagnosed. My anxiety was out of control and I managed to talk myself out of going every week for a couple of months until my husband gave me one of his “talks”. This lead me to message the guys at the farm, i started the following week and I have not looked back since.

One of my biggest interests, before becoming a volunteer, was beekeeping. I am so happy to have been given the opportunity to become a trainee beekeeper and this really is a dream come true for me. What really surprised me was how calm I was around the hive, even on my first interaction. It was amazing to watch the bees and I never realised how busy they were. I find it very relaxing to work with the bees and I leave all my worries behind. I work alongside Lily who is the Beekeeper for Poole Farm. Lily has been absolutely brilliant and has really made this experience enjoyable and given me confidence. I have now led groups of my own through the bees. This is something I never thought I would have been able to do but having such a brilliant teacher has made it possible.

My favourite duties at the Farm are anything that involves the animals. I even have extra duties in the animal care unit on a Monday morning because I love sneaking in all the extra cuddles that I can. My first stop of the day is to say hello to the pigs over the fence. I then go to the Animal Care Unit and say good morning to all of the small animals. The Guinea Pigs always start chatting as I get in and the rats get whiplash as they rush out to greet me as I blow kisses at them. The Hamster twitches his nose through the cage at me and one mouse will always come out to greet me whilst the other struggles to wake up. The Rabbits always give me a nibble on my heel as I collect their bowls or get in the way for attention. For me this is the perfect start to my day and we always do the same routine.

Gemma Gould

Farewell and Welcome

At the end of 2018 we said goodbye to two members of staff. Rosie our Farm Manager and Lianne the Animal Care Apprentice. We were sad to see them leave but are truly grateful for all the hard work they put into the farm especially setting up various projects and infrastructure which is now in place for years to come! Rosie has landed an exciting new job at a farm in the South Hams and Lianne secured a job as a college lecturer up north.

We recently advertised for a new farm apprentice which will be shortlisted in the coming week. We look forward to welcoming a new member to the Poole Farm Team very soon.
Volunteer Work Programme

January

Tuesday 8th: Tree Planting  
Tuesday 15th: Hedgerow management and bridge repair  
Tuesday 22nd: Tree Planting and habitat creation  
Tuesday 29th: Habitat Management

February

Tuesday 5th: Hedgerow Management  
Tuesday 12th: Sapling saving  
Tuesday 19th: Half term event  
Tuesday 26th: Fruit cage creation

Address

Poole Farm  
Plymouth  
Leigham  
PL6 8NF

March

Tuesday 5th: Fenceline Clearance  
Tuesday 12th: Orchard Pruning  
Tuesday 19th: Orchard Management  
Tuesday 26th: Meadow Management

Contact Number: 07500 075719  
Email: derrifordcp@plymouth.gov.uk  
@PooleFarmProject