How pop video models prompt poor body image in girls

The use of ultra-thin models in music videos can lead to poor body image in the young girls who watch them, researchers from the University of Sussex reveal in a new report published last month.

Music videos have been seen as an influence on young people with regard to violence, sexuality and alcohol, but this new study is the first to track the relationship between music video culture and the impact it has on how adolescent girls view their bodies.

Dr Helga Dittmar is a psychologist at Sussex who studies the impact of consumer society on individuals’ sense of identity and well-being and is one of the authors of the study, published in the journal Body Image.

She says: “The mass media is a pervasive force in shaping body ideals, but this negative impact has remained under-examined. Female models in music videos help to promote thinness as desirable – and are often depicted in ways that emphasise this physical ideal. It is against this ideal that young girls come to measure themselves, often unfavourably, which can lead to body dissatisfaction and, in turn, unhealthy eating behaviours.”

The study set out to test if music videos have an adverse effect on young girls’ body dissatisfaction, given that 12-19-year-olds are by far the biggest consumers of such videos, now omnipresent in shops, clubs and in the home, through channels such as MTV. Videos are also often aimed specifically at young girls, says the study, particularly through the marketing of all-girl bands to teenage females.

To test the theory, 87 girls aged 16-19 years at a sixth-form college in the northeast of England took part in a series of tasks described simply as tests to assess memory.

A third watched music videos featuring thin, attractive members of girl bands such as the Pussycat Dolls and Girls Aloud; another third listened only to the music videos; a final third were asked simply to learn a list of neutral words.

All three groups were then asked questions about what they had listened to or watched, and the answers measured for levels of self-esteem, body dissatisfaction and mood.

The researchers discovered that after just ten minutes’ exposure, it was the group who watched music videos featuring thin, idealised models who exhibited the greatest increase in body dissatisfaction, compared to those who merely listened to the songs or had completed the memory task.

Additionally, the findings showed that girls with both high and low self-esteem were equally vulnerable to the negative impact of music videos on their body image.

Dr Dittmar and her co-authors – DPhil student Beth Bell and Rebecca Lawton of the University of Leeds – now hope to extend their research to pre-adolescent girls, and the potential negative impact on young males’ body image from watching muscular male models in music videos.

Sussex students want more courses on Study Direct

A survey of Sussex students who use Study Direct has revealed that the great majority feel it supports their learning and would like to see it more widely used on their degree programmes.

The University launched Study Direct, a learning management system based on Moodle, in August 2006.

In February 2007, a team from the Teaching and Learning Development Unit and IT Services conducted a survey in which students were asked to provide feedback on their experiences of Study Direct. A total of 358 students participated in the survey by completing a short questionnaire, either online or in hard copy.

Over 85% of students considered that Study Direct assisted them in their learning and a similar proportion stated they would like more of their courses supported by Study Direct.

Written comments received from students suggest they have a sophisticated understanding of how e-learning can support their studies. Students feel that Study Direct helps them to feel part of the University social structure and enjoy the ability to access course materials (such as lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations and external web links) on demand. Those course sites that are designed to foster collaboration and peer communication or provide feedback through quizzes are also popular.

The survey also asked how Study Direct could be improved. Respondents would like to see it being used across their entire degree programme, rather than on only a proportion of their courses. Students would also welcome some induction or training on the use of Study Direct and to understand more about how a Study Direct course site is intended to support their learning.

Professor Joanne Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), said: “I am delighted that this survey has been carried out and has got such positive results. It is a testament to the hard work of those supporting e-learning and the staff across Sussex who are using it to enhance their teaching.

“The survey shows that e-learning has the potential to help the University to improve students’ access to learning resources and improve feedback. Both of these areas are highlighted for priority action resulting from the outcomes of the National Student Survey.”

To read more, including implications of the survey and proposed actions, go to www.sussex.ac.uk/elearning/survey

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Campus is teaming with new life and busy birds.
Working together to support all staff at Sussex

UCU is the largest union in further and higher education and is the most effective voice for people working in post-school education.

UCU brings together academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, administrators, managers, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates from universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations.

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For more information and an application form contact Kate Edwards, UCU Administrator, extension 8909 or email: ucusussex@sussex.ac.uk. Or download an application form at: www.ucu.org.uk/join. See also: www.sussex-ucu.org.uk

AMICUS is the union for technical and supervisory staff in the old universities, some of the Crafts staff from the old AEEU, and scientific and technical staff in the medical world.

AMICUS:
- negotiates pay and terms and conditions of service
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- provides help and support on all workplace matters

For more information and an application form contact Paula Bartle, Secretary, extension 6579 or email: P.A.Bartle@sussex.ac.uk. See also: www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/Amicus

UNISON is the trade union for all professional and operational services staff at the University of Sussex. This includes:
- secretarial staff
- administrative staff
- library staff
- manual staff (e.g. porters and cleaners)
- security staff
- receptionists and catering staff

UNISON deals with problems at work and gives professional advice and support on all workplace issues.

If you need legal support to defend your rights or your job, or to get help with compensation for an accident at work, UNISON can provide free legal assistance.

UNISON:
- Negotiates annual pay and terms & conditions at work
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For more information and an application form contact Su Balcombe, Membership Secretary, telephone 733644 or email: unison-membership@sussex.ac.uk. See also: www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/unison

Produced by the University of Sussex Trades Union Liaison Committee (TULC)
Former porter takes trip down memory lane

The University's first ever porter made a trip down memory lane when he came back to campus on 5 June for a visit to Falmer House.

In 1962 Doug Stebbings was involved in moving the University from its first premises in Preston Road, Brighton to the newly built Falmer House. Since then, the bright white concrete in the building has weathered and darkened in colour. Doug is now aged 72 and living in Eastbourne. On his return tour, he seemed less than impressed by the changes to Falmer House since his departure in 1966. "They've massacred this place," he said. He was particularly critical of the fact that the cobbles in the Falmer House moat have been replaced with concrete.

Mandela Hall was the campus refectory in the 1960s. Not all parts of the building were yet in use, Doug recalled.

The corner that now houses CDEC (the Career Development and Employment Centre) was the Senior Common Room (for academic faculty) and bar in Doug's time. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II stopped by the SCR during her campus visit in November 1964 to open the University Library. "I'm a great lover of the Royal Family," said Doug. "Always have been."

He was responsible for the students' behaviour, despite— to begin with— being only eight or nine years older than them. "You had to be firm with them," he recalled, and said that his military background in the Royal Air Force helped.

It's clear he got on well with the students, though; some of them used to go to his house nearby to watch Bamber Gascoigne hosting TV quiz show 'University Challenge', because none of them had access to a television on campus.

One individual student he remembers is a young Virginia Wade (who studied Mathematics at Sussex from 1963-66), who asked if the University was going to have tennis courts. (Six courts have since been built next to the playing fields in Falmer village, and Virginia Wade went on to become a top tennis player, winning Wimbledon in 1977.)

Doug wore a smart porter's uniform, complete with peaked cap and badge. His hours were long: 8am to 11pm, often six days a week. His final task each day was to lock up after everyone had gone, shut the windows and turn off the lights.

Despite the long hours, Doug remembers being Falmer House porter as "the best job I ever had in my life". He said: "I enjoyed the environment. It was a wonderful experience."

FIRST CLASS

Two of the six contenders to be the next deputy leader of the Labour party are Sussex graduates, Peter Hain MP (left), who completed an MPhil in Politics in 1980, is currently Northern Ireland Secretary, while Hilary Benn MP, who graduated in 1974 with a BA in Russian, is Secretary of State for International Development. The winner will be announced on Sunday (24 June) and will start the job on Wednesday (27 June), the day Gordon Brown becomes Prime Minister.

Baba Gana Kingibe, who studied International Relations in the School of African and Asian Studies from 1965-68, has been given a senior position in the Nigerian government. At the end of May the new President of Nigeria appointed Kingibe, a seasoned civil servant and diplomat, to be Secretary to the Government.

Language students Linda Tetlow and Pauline Cratere have won third prize in a Chinese writing competition. Both winners have been attending an Open Language Course in Mandarin Chinese, taught by Lin Li Wu at the Sussex Language Institute. SLI has offered Mandarin classes to students and the general public since 1994 and this academic year nearly 100 students have been learning the Mandarin language and Chinese culture.

Obituary

Musicologist David Osmond-Smith, who died on 31 May at the age of 60, was the foremost authority on post-war Italian art music. But his writing extended to many other areas, notably musical aesthetics and ideology, the sociology of music, and hermeneutics.

In 1973 David turned up on the doorstep of the University of Sussex to join its fledgling Music department. He devoted his entire teaching life to the institution, being made a Professor of Music in 1994, and, after early retirement, remaining a research professor.

The department's strong reputation for 20th-century and contemporary music study, as well as its innovative courses with their dual emphases on praxis and critical thinking, is largely due to David.

He demanded much from his students, not suffering laziness gladly, but rewarded their commitment with invaluable insights, a font of enthusiasm and a remarkable sense of music's roles and functions in history and society.

His idea of teaching them the importance of the minuet in fostering 18th-century social life (for instance) was not to force them to study dozens of musical scores, but to get them to dance one. (One dreadlocked student remarked later that it was the 'sexiest' dance she'd ever done.)

David was an extrovert and galvanising presence on the stage. He conducted the University's Symphony Orchestra, Chorus and Chamber Choir for many years, and he mounted extraordinary student productions of The Threepenny Opera and King Arthur.

David was extremely generous with his time. As a personal tutor, and during his spell as sub-Dean of the School of English and American Studies, he would devote hours and hours to helping students with problems, personal as well as academic.

Astonishingly, David had battled with the HIV virus and related illnesses, and survived, for about 25 years. It nearly claimed him in 1996 when he developed severe toxoplasmosis in the brain, leaving him partially paralysed and reliant on a walking stick for the rest of his life.

His painfully slow progress across campus (ever nattily dressed) was always conducted with immense dignity and patience. The students awaiting his arrival learned to be patient too. He was worth waiting for.

Professor Martin Butler, Music
BROADCAST

It's interesting to see the angles taken by the media when presented with academic research.

Jacqui Bealing
Senior Press Officer

Foundation, published 31 May, on the experiences and aspirations of migrants to Britain, received blanket coverage – largely because of the statistic that one in four migrants intended to stay.

The right-wing press, including the Daily Mail, Daily Express and most of the regional daily papers, turned this into their headline; the left-leaning Radio 4, Radio 5 Live, several regional BBC stations, the Guardian and Independent focussed more on the negative experiences reported by migrants.

Also receiving national – and international – press coverage has been Dr Helga Dittmar’s research on the influence of pop videos on young girls’ body images. This time there was more consensus among the media, with, among others, The Times (31 May), Guardian, Daily Telegraph and Melbourne Herald all railing against ultra-thin singers and dancers.

Rarely out of the spotlight, Dorothy Sheridan was on BBC Radio 4’s ‘Today’ programme, talking about Mass Observation diaries for the programme’s 40th anniversary (7 June). She was also profiled in the Guardian’s ‘Work’ section (2 June).

Professor Jo Boaler was invited to discuss if “maths is for blokes” on BBC Radio 4’s ‘More or Less’ (14 May). She countered the argument by pointing out that girls now out-perform boys at GCSE and A level. Boys have a spatial advantage at an earlier age only because they are encouraged to play with mathematical toys.

The Sussex Energy Group has been busy. Mari Martiskainen was on Southern FM (31 May) talking about energy-efficient light bulbs, and Dr Alister Scott was on the same station on (7 June) on recycling. And on the subject of the government’s Energy White Paper, Dr Jim Watson was on Channel 4 News (23 May) and Professor Gordon Mackerron on BBC Radio 4’s ‘The World Tonight’.

Dr David Reby, Ben Charlton and Dr Karen McComb’s research showing it’s the size of a deer stag’s roar – not his antlers – that attracts the females, appeared in Metro (8 June) and the Daily Express (8 June).

SUSSEX GRADUATE IS A EURO ENTREPRENEUR

A young businessman based at the Sussex Innovation Centre on campus is in the running to become Europe’s Young Entrepreneur 2007 as part of a competition run by BusinessWeek magazine.

Raj Anand who set up his company Kwiqq.com at the Innovation Centre after graduating from Sussex, is one of 16 people shortlisted for the prestigious prize.

Kwiqq’s web-based software creates online social networks tailored to the specific needs of a company’s customers or user base.

Readers of BusinessWeek’s website were invited to nominate who they felt deserved the prize, open to young entrepreneurs aged 25 and below.

The nominations were open for six weeks and were screened by the website’s editors.

Voting is currently open to decide who should be given the title of Europe’s Young Entrepreneur 2007.

Raj isn’t sure who nominated him for the award, but has some ideas as to why he was.

He said: “Within the last four months we have bagged top travel brands and companies, First Choice Travel and 2ventures as our clients.

He added: “Kwiqq was recently invited by an educational organisation called the Hansard Society, on behalf of Britain’s Parliament, to be one of 50 stakeholders to contribute ideas for improving the role of information and communications technology in democracy.”

For more information and to vote for Raj, visit his site: www.kwiqq.com/raj%7E.

LETTERS

IS THE NEW CYCLE PATH SAFE?

Thanks to the University for extending the cycle way in front of Falmer House.

But it is the first time I’ve seen such a narrow cycle path with right angles for cyclists to navigate. More significantly, one stretch is sandwiched between an often busy footpath and a bulky wooden barrier: I fear pedestrians or cyclists or both will come to grief.

I wonder if users were consulted before the new route was designed and constructed.

PROFESSOR FRED GRAY, SUSSEX INSTITUTE

Chris Wadey, Transport Manager, replies:

The new cycle path provides a link from the campus to the National Cycle Network (C50 route) and was recommended in 2004 by transport consultants who carried out a campus traffic-management study.

The route extension is also at the request of the Health and Safety Office, to stop cycling in areas where it is not permitted – including through the Falmer House quad, where accidents between cyclist and pedestrians have occurred.

The path accommodates both pedestrians and cyclists and the width of the cycle lane is the minimum acceptable for cycle use.

We will consider what adjustments are required following the comments made.

FOUR OUT OF TEN FOR TENNIS PLAYER

Andy Black from Life Sciences has a pretty good record in the O’Reilly Cup: the mixed doubles tournament has been contested annually for 10 years and on 3 June he won it for the fourth time.

Retired staff member Pauline O’Reilly is pictured with the trophy in her name. “We had a fantastic afternoon’s tennis,” she said.

On the right are Andy Black and the women’s winner, Dr Cherith Moses (Geography). The runners-up, Simon Turley (Sussexsport) and Professor Jenny Rusted (Psychology), are on the left.

“The event was very enjoyable and the weather was great,” said Simon.
Exceptional staff go the extra mile

This year’s Chancellor’s Awards will go to four members of staff, all of whom have gone that extra mile in their roles.

The winning employees were John Goldsmith, Graham Pentecost, Clare Rogers and Carol Shergold.

Each winner will receive £500 and a presentation from the Chancellor, Lord Attenborough, at the summer or winter graduation ceremonies.

Staff or students could nominate any member of staff for any aspect of work, other than direct teaching and research.

The nominees for the award were judged by a panel chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith.

John Goldsmith was nominated by Paul Feast, Head of Estates and Infrastructure, for his work with the ageing boilers, ensuring that the campus was kept warm until the heating system could be replaced.

Paul said: “John has worked diligently to keep the fragile system operational and to continually nurse it to a point in time when it can be replaced.

“John took his duties seriously despite suffering a variety of significant ill-health issues. Yet he continued to provide a friendly, professional service at all times.”

John joined the University in June 1979 and was due to retire at the end of September 2004; however, he was asked to work beyond retirement until the heating system was replaced. (A modern, energy-efficient, cheaper and reliable new system will come into operation this autumn.)

On being told he was a recipient of the Chancellor’s Award, John said: “Myself and my family are absolutely delighted in me winning this. I would never have believed that someone in my line of work would get something like this.

“It’s a lovely achievement and tops off 28 enjoyable years of working at the University. I’m thrilled to bits.”

Graham Pentecost, Senior Premises Assistant in Falmer House, will receive an award following a huge amount of support from students. He had a Facebook site set up for him online, where many people added their reasons for nomination.

The many examples given to support the nomination mentioned Graham’s out-of-hours work and his regular help to students in all manner of ways – from setting up events, to helping them find lost items and answering queries.

Emma Reynolds, USSU Communications Officer, nominated Graham. She said, “All initiatives running in or from Falmer House do so only thanks to Graham’s input and co-ordination. He goes above and beyond the call of duty, supporting community members across the Students’ Union and University in all aspects of work – cheerfully taking on extra responsibilities or staying overtime.”

She added: “Graham is popular with students and staff, yet is consistently organised and productive. His training and supervision of staff is unsurpassable and he supports students’ and sabbatical officers’ events organisation, health and safety, and responsible and effective distribution of publications and publicity.”

Graham said: “I feel honoured to receive this award. The response from students and colleagues has been overwhelming and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody.”

Clare Rogers, Contextual Course Coordinator in the School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, was nominated by a huge volume of staff and students, both past and present. Some students also set up an area on the Facebook website to encourage people to nominate.

Many times in the nominations, Clare’s inspiration, guidance and general kindness were quoted as reasons for her to win the award.

Sophia Casas, who originally nominated Clare, said: “It would not be an overstatement to say the journey of my three years at Sussex would have been significantly different and less meaningful had I not met Clare Rogers.

“With all that she has added to my experience of Sussex, it is an honour, on behalf of Development Studies students, to nominate Clare because of her significant and unquestionable contribution to the quality of student experience at Sussex.”

Clare was pleased to receive the award: “In this job, Mondays are an enticing prospect: the gorgeous campus, new things to learn, helpful colleagues and, best of all, the inspiration, passion, altruism and energy of Development Studies students.

“To receive a Chancellor’s Award is a signal honour but to be nominated by the students I love will make it the happiest day of my life.”

Another winner is Carol Shergold, Programme Development Director in IT Services (ITS). She was nominated for her work in the area of e-learning and specifically her contribution to Study Direct, the ‘virtual learning environment’ for all Sussex students.

According to those who nominated her, Carol has put all her energies into setting up Study Direct and ensuring those members of staff who use it have appropriate technological support and advice.

Dr John Davies from the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU), who supported Carol’s nomination, said: “Carol has played a vital role in leading and managing a small team of people to create a stable e-learning platform for Sussex.”

Professor Joanne Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), describes Carol as deserving of the award because she “represents how we can provide excellent and integrated professional services that are focused on customer service”.

Carol is thrilled to be receiving an award. She said: “The commitment to high-quality teaching and learning that we have here at Sussex is very inspiring, and it’s been a real pleasure to contribute towards this.

“Study Direct has been a real team effort and every member of our joint TLDU/ITS team has played a huge role. This includes John Davies and Stephen Taylor from the TLDU and Paolo Oprandi, Mark Parsons and Sandy Radford in ITS.”
Reports reveal migrant view of ‘polite but distant’ Britain

The experiences of migrants from eastern Europe – and the impact they have on communities in the UK – were highlighted in two reports by University of Sussex migration researchers published last month by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

The first report is based on research by academics from the University of Oxford and human geographer Dr Ben Rogaly, a member of the Centre for Migration Research at Sussex.

The second report is by Eugenia Markova, a former research fellow at the Centre, and Professor Richard Black, the Centre’s co-director.

Poor pay and prospects, a lack of information and social mobility and a ‘polite but distant’ reception from the resident British were the common experiences of the migrants interviewed for the two studies.

The findings were commissioned by the JRF for its Immigration and Inclusion programme, which seeks to provide evidence of what is happening in local areas affected by immigration – from the perspective of both newcomers and long-term residents.

The first report is based on interviews with over 600 migrants from eastern and central Europe working in four low-wage occupations. It explores their access to information and to English classes, their accommodation, leisure time, social relationships and long-term intentions about staying in the UK.

The report reveals:

Migrants’ experiences at work, including low pay and long working hours, had a significant impact on their lives beyond the workplace;
A lack of practical information on arrival left many migrants ignorant of the conditions attached to their immigration status, how to access health care, where to obtain advice and their rights at work;
English-language proficiency was a key factor in whether migrants had received the information they needed and the extent of their social contact with British people.

The second report explores how the presence of new immigrants from Albania, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Ukraine affects community cohesion in Harrow, Hackney and Brighton and Hove.

It found that:

Generally, the immigrants had been very successful in finding employment, but in low-paid work with limited occupational mobility;
Only a minority of immigrants felt they belonged to their neighbourhood (half as many as long-term residents), despite feeling they belonged to the UK as a whole;
Immigrants’ sense of belonging to the neighbourhood was positively affected by better housing status, length of time in the UK, plans to stay in the UK, and having their children living with them.

Both reports make a strong case for including economic migrants in social and community cohesion strategies, even when their stay is expected to be temporary.

Such measures would include better access to practical information and to English classes, an appreciation of migrant needs in the wider context of affordable housing, and action to address relations between migrants and the wider population.

Richard says: “The arrival of eastern European immigrants in Britain is often portrayed in the press as a big problem, but these reports paint a more positive picture.

“Nonetheless, there is scope for government action to maximise the benefit of this immigration both for the migrants themselves, and for the communities they are living in.”

Why female deer like a stag to be a big noise in the forest

Impressive antlers may be the most eye-catching attribute of the male red deer, but it’s the quality of a stag’s mating call that attracts the female of the species, a new Sussex study has discovered.

The research was carried out by Ben Charlton as part of his doctoral research, with Dr David Reby and Dr Karen McComb from the Centre for Mammal Vocal Communication Research in the Psychology department.

According to the findings, published in Biology Letters on 6 June, ovulating red deer hinds (females) show an active preference for male roars advertising larger males. This study provides the first experimental evidence from non-human mammals that females use an acoustic cue to body size when selecting a mate.

The researchers studied a group of farmed hinds at an experimental deer farm just outside Clermont Ferrand in France.

Ovulating hinds were presented with re-synthesised male roars played back through two separate speakers, which simulated a natural vocal exchange between two rutting stags.

The experiment showed that during ovulation, which occurs for just 24 hours once a year, females prefer to move towards male roars indicating larger callers. The females would also prefer to wait around by a speaker simulating a larger male.

Ben says: “Male roaring in red deer is clearly linked to reproduction as it only occurs during the breeding season. Red deer are therefore an ideal species in which to study vocal communication in a reproductive context. Males provide no parental care, so female preferences are likely to be based solely on aspects of male genetic quality, such as body size.”

Acoustic cues to body size are important for hinds because mating activity in red deer continues throughout the night, when it is difficult to view prospective mates.

Ben says: “Acoustic cues to male quality, such as body size, are therefore likely to be important to females selecting a mate. It’s also difficult to visually assess and compare the body size of potential mates unless they are at the same distance and angle, preferably side on, to the observer.”

And the reason for bigger stags being better? Ben explains: “Larger stags have higher reproductive success. Males compete fiercely for access to females and larger males are more likely to prevail in competition with other males. Females benefit by mating with larger males because they gain the indirect benefits of larger, more competitive offspring when mated by these individuals.

Funding for the research came from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and from the Nuffield Foundation.

Ben will now be moving on to a new challenge studying the vocal behaviour of giant panda in reproductive contexts, as part of postdoctoral research at ZooAtlanta in the USA.
Gull watch

Forget ‘Big Brother’, the most fascinating housemate currently is a seagull who has made her nest outside the Print Unit on campus.

Instead of the usual locations for gulls to nest, which are up high and out of the way of predators, this seagull has decided a scrub of grass by the Science car park is the perfect spot to bring her chicks into the world.

The Print Unit team have arranged some cones and tape around the seagull’s nesting area in order to alert passers-by to the visitor and to ensure people don’t disturb the mum-to-be.

The male and female seagulls share incubation and the eggs are expected to hatch in approximately a week’s time.

Herring gulls usually lay either two or three eggs; this particular gull is thought to have two eggs. They are about the size of a hen’s egg, but they are multi-coloured with greens, browns and black spots to keep them camouflaged.

Dr Martyn Stenning, who is working with some colleagues at the University on breeding herring gulls and who is studying their nesting behaviour, explained why this seagull has chosen the ground.

He said: “Most gulls have the sense to nest on the top of buildings where predators rarely go. However, many gulls at Sussex have become so tame that they have no fear of humans.

Home sweet home: The seagull looks after her eggs in an unlikely spot.

“In wild places like the islands off Wales, gulls nest among the grass tussocks, not necessarily on the cliffs, but also in the middle of the island.

“We are of course an island, and the grass outside the Print Unit must have looked inviting to them and perhaps sheltered from the winds a little.”

Martyn and his fellow gull watchers, Loic Hardoin and Dr David Reby, are monitoring the nest which, he says they are surprised has lasted this long, because predators such as foxes and badgers are thought to be around.

A walk on the wild side

Campus is teeming with young birds that have recently left the comfort of their nests.

These early days in the outside world are usually the most dangerous part of a bird’s whole life, so please do not disturb any helpless-looking chicks or their harassed parents.

Small but noisy flocks of Blue Tits are especially obvious on campus. At the moment these consist of pairs and their chicks, but gradually the flocks will get muddled up. A typical female Blue Tit on campus lays nine eggs, which are incubated for about a fortnight. Both parents feed the chicks in the nest for roughly three weeks, which is much longer than most small birds, such as Robins, which leave the nest after a fortnight.

Although the chicks start to feed themselves within a few days of leaving the nest, they continue to beg for food, and to be fed by their parents, for up to three more weeks. As soon as a chick spots an adult Blue Tit carrying food it gives loud high-pitched ‘tsee-tsee-tsee-tsee-tsee’ begging calls. Even when no adults are present, the chicks are still noisy, giving lower-pitched, quieter calls that often sound to us like “chee-chee-chair”. It is believed that these calls help the flock members to maintain contact with each other in dense foliage. They may have the drawback of attracting the attention of the local Sparrowhawks, who are feeding their own young.

Having gone on at length about Cow Parsley in our last piece [Bulletin 18 May], we find ourselves having to return again to the matter of umbellifers, but for opposite reasons. Because of its visible exuberance and characteristic smell, Cow Parsley assaults the senses, while the plant that has recently excited our interest sits firmly at the other end of the umbellifer spectrum.

Last summer’s excavations for the refurbished campus heating system have left a legacy of temporary bare patches in some of the restored grassland areas. Such is the case of the bank on the east side of the North-South Road just beyond the Biology lecture theatre. Such places that are warm, dry and lacking competition from the more vigorous species are likely hunting grounds for short-lived plants with a rather southerly distribution.

Here, hugging the ground, we recently spotted tufts of short Cow Parsley-like leaves that on closer inspection turned out to be Knotted Hedge Parsley, a plant that we haven’t seen on campus before.

An annual, the small “kotted” umbels, which are borne opposite the leaves, are almost rayless (the struts of the umbrella) and only about 1cm across. The tiny flowers are more pink than white. As befits a plant with an Atlantic-Mediterranean distribution, it is found scattered throughout most of southern England, growing particularly on sea walls and cliff-tops near the coast and as an arable weed inland, where it is becoming scarce.

84/86 bus to be withdrawn

The Brighton & Hove bus company is to withdraw the 84/86 service, which links campus with the Woodingdean, Whitehawk and Patcham areas.

One of the key objectives in the University’s Travel Plan is to encourage staff and students to use sustainable transport, including public transport. With this in mind, the University has subsidised the 84/86 service for the past four years.

However, following a survey last year that showed very few people use the route, the University is withdrawing its subsidy.

After discussions with the University and Brighton & Hove City Council, the Brighton & Hove bus company has decided to terminate the service from 22 September.

A new service will be set up next term in an area identified as needing a route, which will increase the numbers of staff and students commuting to campus by bus. The area this new route will serve is yet to be decided.

“A subsidised service must support as many people as possible,” said Chris Wadley, Transport Manager.

&
Academic events

MON 18 JUNE

MIDNIGHT German-Jewish Studies: Griseida Pollock (Leeds): Theatre of memory - The Allo- thanathography of Charlotte Salmon's Leben oder Theater. BSMS M63.07A.

TUE 19 JUNE

12.30pm Centre for Life History seminar: Tom Selwyn (London Metropolitan), Mediterranean counterpart: Reflections on the EU's MED VOICES project. Arts A1L.

1pm Physical Electronics and Quantum Technology seminar: Helen France (Sussex), Cryogenic electronics: DC to microwave. Pevensey 1A2.

4pm COGS seminar: Padraic Monaghan (York), Arbitrariness in form-meaning mappings: Why we don't say what we mean. Pevensey 1A1.

WED 20 JUNE

12.30pm seminar: Alan Lehmann (Sussex), GDSC Seminar Room.

2pm Politics seminar: Mark Bennister (Sussex), A study of prime ministerial predominance. Arts C233.

WED 27 JUNE

12.30pm Seminar: Bert van der Horst (Rotterdam), Towards an understanding of Cockayne Syndrome and other NER progenies, GDSC Seminar Room.

Small ads

Wanted: Good-size double room in flat/house to share with professional(s) or mature student(s) in B'ton or Lewes. Needed from 1 July. T Adrian on 07745042637 or a.castaldo@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: 3 case studies for staff member taking Diploma in Life Coaching. Wellness/fitness, personal development, career, etc. 6 sessions, 1 of which to be recorded. No fee. T Brenda on 01 (day) or 057854 (after 6.30pm).

Holiday let: Tuscan farmhouse, sleeps 7 + 3, 5 mins Luca, 20 mins Pisa, 45 mins Flo- rence. Touring, walking, cycling, relaxing. E DBlewes825@aol.com.

Wanted: Accommodation in B'ton or Hove for PG 32, M, N/S, clean, quiet, tidy. £400 pcm incl. T 07949 728977 or fluid2k@ sussex.ac.uk (for details & eligibility questionnaire).

Wanted: Participants to eat breakfast & taste snacks in Ingestive Behaviour lab on 11 non-consecutive days. Earn £50. £30 Sarah Robinson on s Robinson@sussex.ac.uk for details.


For sale: Dell laptop Latitude C40 - Epson inkjet printer Stylus C4400X, Windows Milennium. Microsoft Office 2000. Internet access, ethernet & wireless, CD/DVD drive, floppy disk & USB port. 1298MB RAM. Offers accepted. E ann006@ sussex.ac.uk, T 07905 98 1427.


MIDNIGHT Wanted: Small house, flat Sep-June. T 0151 6250275.

Arts event

PERFORMANCE

Wed 20 June 6pm Mexican concert

Mexican students perform music for voice and piano by some of the most important Mexican composers. Meeting House.

Carlos Chavez, Mexican composer.

Brummer House catering

The Downs Restaurant in Brummer House will be closed to Sussex staff and students from 2 July to 4 August and from 3 September to 1 October, while it is used to service the University's conference business.

The Coffee Shop and the Baguette Express in the same building will remain open between these dates.

Meanwhile, work continues on a major project to create new teaching space on level 2 of Brummer House, in the space formerly occupied by the Laines Restaurant and Granpino Bar.

By the start of the 2007-08 academic year, there will be 16 new seminar rooms, an area of flexible teaching space and an open-access computer cluster for students.

News in brief

Win a night at the Grand Hotel

You could win one night’s stay at the five-star De Vere Grand Hotel in Brighton, inclusive of dinner for two in the Kings Restaurant, overnight accommodation in a double room, and full English breakfast. But you need to know the University of Sussex rate for one night’s double occupancy of a double/twin room. To find the answer, see www.sussex.ac.uk/about/hotels. Email it together with your name, address, phone number and designation (i.e. staff, student or alumnus/alumna), to hotelcompetition@sussex.ac.uk. The closing date is Friday 6 July.

Whistler Prize 2007

Two £150 prizes are available for original essays on natural history or archaeology. The competition is open to all Sussex students and the closing date is 3 September. For details, see www.sussex.ac.uk/cce.

Summer sports activities for children

Sussexsport will be hosting and organising a series of sports camps for children aged 5 -16 across the school summer holiday period. Activities will include cricket, football, basketball, badminton, squash, trampolining, tennis and multisports. For further details or an application form, email Luke Terrill on l.o.terrill@sussex.ac.uk or see www.sussexsport.com.

Party time

To celebrate the end of the academic year, on Saturday 23 June all staff and their families are invited to join Sussex alumni and friends at the first Sussex Summer Barbeque. As well as a BBQ at Palmer Bar, there will be a live jazz band, bouncy castles, sports activities, craft activities with face painting, and a break dancing performance and workshops. The event will begin at 12 noon and finish at 5pm. Tickets cost £10 for adults and £5 for children aged 5 to 12; under 5s are free. Tickets are available from the Development and Alumni Relations Office in Brummer House. Call ext 7707 or visit www.sussex.ac.uk/units/alumni/store system/index.html to book online.

All articles are also featured on the internet at www.sussex.ac.uk/press_office/bulletin.