

Monmouthshire Meadows

Issue 29

Registered Charity No. 1111345

Autumn 2018

Our aims are to conserve and enhance the landscape by enabling members to maintain, manage and restore their semi-natural grasslands and associated features

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From the Chair

Stephanie Tyler

It has been a very strange year for weather – very cold and very wet in the early spring and then dry and hot for many weeks in the late spring and early summer.

Surveys

There has been a spate of new members but the survey team (Elsa Wood, Sheelagh Kerry and me) has managed to visit land owned by all these (except one) as well as re-visit several sites to see progress. Most sites are small areas of one or two acres but larger interesting sites included the 29 acre Bealieu Ridge Farm owned by Bob Nock near Staunton, the 15 acre Pant y Pwll Farm at The Hendre owned by David and Jules Barrell and the 149 acre Three Pools Farm at Llanvetherine now owned by Huw Evans. Three Pools Farm was also the venue for a Bioblitz organised by the South-east Wales Biological Records Centre (SEWBRc) on 14 July at which the Group was represented. Many small sites turned out to be of great interest as for example four acres on Barbadoes Hill recently bought by Richard Jackson and his wife where there was much Devil's-bit Scabious, Spotted Orchids, Eyebright and many other plants.



Baling hay at Trellech Wet Meadow, Dick Coates

Reserve Round-up

The dry weather in July made mowing so much easier this year and the hay was taken at all three of our reserves during the summer. At Ida's Meadow at Maryland a small group of us pulled encroaching bracken during the spring and we are planning a work party in late November to cut back fallen willows – do come if you can. Suzanne Noble, formerly of the PlantWild seed company, is now specialising in growing native orchids and she collected some seed from our Greater Butterfly Orchids at this reserve.



Betony at Wet Meadow, Dick Coates

At Wet Meadow near Trellech Dick Coates continues to keep an eye on things and has been weeding the new hedge and preparing long gaps in internal hedges ready for planting up in the New Year. We are obtaining hedge plants from Tom Ward-Jackson through the Long Forest Project. Neville Hart of Gwent Wildlife Trust has rolled the bracken around the edges twice and that has made a huge difference in weakening

it and preventing further encroachment. The orchids this year were stunning – huge swathes of Heath Spotted Orchids, many Common Spotted Orchids and a lovely patch of Early Marsh x Spotted Orchid hybrids. In August the Betony and Devil's-bit Scabious at the edges of the two bogs put on a wonderful show and was useful to bees and other insects after the hay was cut.

At Kingcoed Meadows professional photographers have been taking shots each month through the season from fixed points and also from overhead drones, for a forthcoming film on the wildlife of different habitats in Wales.

Roger Ruston has also found a good population of the scarce Long-horned Bee at the meadows where Tufted Vetch seems to be especially important (see his article later in this newsletter). He alerted me to vehicle tracks through the meadows in June and Rachel Morgan followed this up contacting the adjacent landowner from where the tracks emerged and it turned out that a Hot



*Emergency landing at Kingcoed,
Keivan Edwards*

Contact MMG

If you are not a member and would like to join contact our membership secretary Marilyn Dunkelman on **01600 860031**, marilyn@monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk or use our [online membership form](#)

Contributions to the newsletter or items for the web site can be sent to Marilyn

For general information please contact Sheelagh Kerry on **01873 890598** or smk@smithecology.co.uk

Contact details for our Committee, as well as our news and events and information about our meadow reserves at Kingcoed and Maryland, are on our web site www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter @MonMeadows



Air Balloon had made a landing on the meadow and the tracks were from the vehicle that collected the balloon. We are expecting a donation for this!

Elsewhere, photographer Nanette Hepburn of Hepburn Photography has been taking photographs of orchids at a number of sites, including Wet Meadow, for an article that will be in Landscape magazine.

Mowing jobs

The Group's Tracmaster has been put to good use with David Llewellyn mowing several garden meadows at Penallt, a field of almost an acre at Beacon Farm on Beacon Hill and a large orchard at Llanlowell House near Usk. Lindsay Tyler also used the machine to mow a member's orchard and path in the Llanthony Valley.

Ponies

The two Exmoor Ponies were at their summer home with Jane and Tony Pannett near Tintern until the end of August before being moved to the Virtuous Well to have their feet trimmed and graze off some vegetation at this wetland. They are now at Nigel and Jane Seabourne's fields on Mitchel Troy Common and are scheduled to graze fields on Barbadoes Hill, in the Whitebrook and Angidy Valleys and at Manson Barn near Monmouth. Thanks as ever to Alan and Steph Poulter for ensuring their welfare and moving them from site to site.

AGM and Open Meadow Days

The AGM seems a long time ago now but was a successful evening with an excellent buffet prepared by members and organised by Judith Carruthers. Colin Cheesman, Programme Director of Plantlife Cymru, the Welsh section of the national plant charity gave a talk first on the work of Plantlife in Wales, particularly concentrating on grasslands, and he showed several short films by Trevor Dines, Plantlife's Botanical Specialist, on creating a meadow.

Our two Open Meadows events were popular and very enjoyable occasions. The first was to Blaentrophy Meadows near Grosmont owned now by Ruaridh and Caroline MacDonald. They form an SSSI and are probably the most important and largest area of species-rich grassland in Monmouthshire. Everyone who came was very impressed with the thousands of Heath Spotted orchids and

hybrids and we saw the first known Southern Marsh Orchids from the meadows as well as a host of other interesting plants. Our hosts very kindly provided tea and refreshments for members. The second was an evening walk around lovely meadows at Ty Major in the hills near Forest Coal Pit, owned by Sheelagh Kerry and her partner Peter Smith. The views and the orchids were appreciated by all and again refreshments were on offer.



A glorious open evening at Ty Major

MMG was also present at the National Bee Day event at the Nelson Gardens in Monmouth, Gwent Wildlife Trust's Open Farm Sunday at Pentwyn reserve, and at the Chepstow and Usk Shows together with Bee Friendly Monmouthshire. We thank Phil Powell of Gwent Energy cic for sponsoring the tent at Chepstow.

Steph Tyler



Ready for the Crowds: Martin Fenn-Smith on the MMG stand at Chepstow Show (Rosemary Parkhouse)

Committee Roles

The MMG committee is elected each year by our members at the spring Annual General Meeting. There were no changes to the people this year but a few have taken on different roles. Rachel Morgan, our treasurer last year, is now vice chair of the group, supporting Steph. The new treasurer is David Llewellyn, who also looks after our machinery and drives the Tracmaster.

After the AGM, Cecilia Davies stepped down from her role as membership secretary, handing over to Marilyn Dunkelman. The group are very grateful for Cecilia's work over the last two years and pleased that she will continue to be a member of the committee.

The current committee is:

Steph Tyler – Chair
Rachel Morgan – Vice chair
Sheelagh Kerry – Secretary
David Llewellyn – Treasurer
Marilyn Dunkelman – Membership secretary
& newsletter/web site editor
Dick Coates – Warden, Trellech Wet Meadow
Clare Adamson – Publicity officer
Steph Poulter – Ponies
Cecilia Davies
Judith Carruthers
Sarah Cheese
Pam Manfield

Welcome to our New Members

We are delighted to welcome these new members to the group:

Jules & Dave Barrell, The Hendre
Sarah Brudenell, Blakeney
Carol & Philip Cook, The Narth
Belinda Davies, Lower Cwmyoy
Huw Evans, Llanvetherine
Helene Gardiner, Garway Hill
Mick Goodyear, Symonds Yat
Richard Helyer, Portishead
John Hinderer, Chepstow
Richard Jackson, Tintern
Susan & Gareth Jenkins, Llanishen
Nicholas Macdonald-Buchanan, Cwmyoy
Emily Melville-Roberts, St Maughans
Shane Mills-Heyes, Devauden
Catherine Nelson, London
Robert & Suzanna Nock, Staunton
Sarah Orchard, St Briavels
Roger Ruston, Monmouth
David & Caroline Sharratt, Tidenham
Sally Simons, Monmouth
Elin Sommer, Bryngwyn
Mark Thornycroft, Trelleck
Ruth Thurston, Croesyceiliog
Guinevere Vaughan, Nantyduerry
John Weale, Welsh Newton

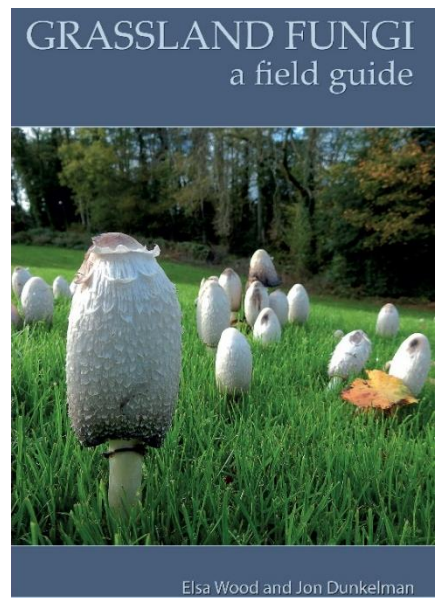
Grassland Fungi Season is Here

Now the Waxcaps and Pinkgills are appearing in the fields, time to get out the identification guides, and if you haven't yet purchased a copy of MMG's publication *Grassland Fungi: A Field Guide* now is the time. Written by Elsa Wood and Jon Dunkelman, with help from photographers Keith Moseley, Malcolm Schuyl and others, it contains descriptions of 177 species and over 800 photographs, selected to illustrate the key identification points. There is an overview of the process of identifying fungi in the field, with technical terms kept to a minimum and a helpful glossary. The format is A5, 336 pages.



Earthy Waxcap, (Jon Dunkelman)

The book will be available at a reduced price to members at our Autumn Meeting, or it can be purchased from our official distributors NHBS from their web site www.nhbs.com (search for Grassland Fungi). You can also order it from book shops.



Autumn Social

Tuesday 16th October at The Community Centre, Abergavenny

Our Autumn meeting starts as usual at 7pm with a review of activities, followed by our main speaker Ruaridh MacDonald, owner of Blaentrophy Meadows, and then a buffet supper and social.

Blaentrophy meadows are part of the wonderful organic farm where we held our first Open Day earlier this year, and Ruaridh will be talking about the history and management of the meadows, designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the value of their wildflowers.

The Community Centre is a new venue for us. It is located in a Victorian building, the former Park Street Infants School, on Merthyr Road. The entrance to the carpark is near Somerset Arms Hotel & Keith Price Volvo garage.

[Link to online map](#)

There's a charge to cover the cost of the buffet (which includes a glass of wine) but if you are a member and just want to come to the talk it's free (with a small charge to non-members):

- Members: £14.00 each
- Non-members: £17.00 each
- Meeting only: £2.00 non-members (members free)

Please book in advance as we need to know how many people to cater for. You can book online on our web site or contact Marilyn Dunkelman: 01600 860031, or email marilyn@monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk

Send payment by cheque, made payable to Monmouthshire Meadows Group, to Marilyn at The Beeches, The Narth, Monmouth NP25 4QL. If you prefer to pay using Internet banking we'll send account details when we receive your booking.



Heath Spotted-orchids at Blaentrophy Meadows
(Jon Dunkelman)



Petition to Protect British Meadows

There are so many petitions online these days that it is difficult to know which, if any, to support, but this one on Change.org asks Environment Secretary Michael Gove to remember the plight of wildflower meadows when drafting his proposed wildlife legislation and we think it is one worth signing. At the time of writing the petition was on its way to 200,000 signatures, which just shows we are not alone in valuing our butterflies, bees and wildflowers.

The petition was started by Alex Christian and links to PlantLife.

Link: [Petition to protect British meadows](#)

The new MMG banners had their first outing at the Usk Show in September

Is Rye-grass Always Greener?

MMG's main work is supporting landowners who want to manage their grasslands for wildflowers and other flora and fauna associated with traditional meadows. A bigger problem is how to address the wider decline of meadows by encouraging more farmers to revert to less intensive management techniques. One way is to create a market for cattle fed in the traditional way, to make it financially viable for the farmers to convert. Another is to provide evidence that there are other benefits to traditional grazing that could improve the profit margin. With this in mind, the groups behind Save Our Magnificent Meadows campaign have published the results of their research into the potential benefits to cattle and humans, consisting of a review and analysis of existing evidence for the nutritional, medicinal and production value of species-rich grasslands.

They concluded that there is some evidence that, while species-rich grasslands do not have the same levels of energy and protein as agriculturally improved grasslands, the herbal content has higher quantities of minerals, and that some plant species contain compounds that help to prevent or reduce illness. Research on livestock grazing herbal leys has shown that the animals tend to put on more weight, produce more milk and maintain health compared with animals on 'improved' pasture, but no research has been done on whether this is also the case for species-rich grasslands. However, consumer panels have found that the produce from meadows-grazed livestock is better tasting!

The recommendation of the report is that there is a case for investigating whether the identified benefits of herbal leys also apply to species-rich grassland (as seems likely) and to provide firm evidence that plants found on traditional meadows do indeed contain antidotes to ailments of livestock. This would go a long way to persuading commercial farmers to change some of their practices, while providing consumers with a tastier product.



Cattle grazing in sown meadow Courtyard Organic Farm near Ringstead in Norfolk ©Emorsgate Seeds

The full report, *Is the rye-grass always greener? An evidence review of the nutritional, medicinal and production value of species-rich grassland* is available at www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk/assets/pdfs/Is_the_rye-grass_always_greener_An_evidence_review.pdf

Gwent Fungus Group

Gwent Fungus Group is a group of enthusiasts who record fungi at sites in Gwent and submit their findings to the South East Wales Record Centre (SEWBRc) and to national databases. Their work, together with that of similar groups throughout the UK, enables mycologists to detect changes in the frequency and distribution of species (for example as a result of climate change) and monitor the spread of fungi "new" to the UK, or the decline of those formerly abundant.



Although the primary aim is to record species as an aid to conservation, if they find a nice group of edible fungi they are not averse to collecting some to eat!

Some members are interested in larger species, others in tiny ones that require microscopic work for identification. Other have special interests such as woodland or grassland fungi, or in fungi photography.

The group welcomes beginners and there will always be people ready to give help with identification.

They have a new web site where you can find contact details if you are interested in joining them at www.gwentfungi.org.uk

More Encounters with Long-horned Bees

Roger Ruston

Bee expert Roger Ruston has been surveying MMG reserves at Kingcoed and Trellech, and at Middle Crwys near Hendre. This is his report of his 2018 findings.

Long-horned Bees (*Eucera longicornis*) are mainly found in Devon and Cornwall and along the coast of south Wales (Saunders 2018). They can also turn up well away from the coast, as testified by Cheryl Cummings, a member of the Meadows Group, who photographed one in her Monmouth garden on 19 June.



Long-horned Bee (Cheryl Cummings)

In 2017 I reported on Long-horned Bees in the Monmouth area, about how precarious their small local population is, and what threats they face in the agricultural environment. I'm glad to say that in 2018 their numbers have been well up on previous years in at least two local meadows. On 30 June at Kingcoed Meadow, I found 11 bees, of which 8 were females, and on 9 July, 25 females. These were all foraging on the large patches of Tufted Vetch which are such a striking part of the flora there.

As solitary bees go, they are large, and females move among the flowers with slow deliberation, well



Female Long-horned Bee at Kingcoed

spread out over the meadow. Almost every patch of vetch was being worked by at least one female.

This made it easier to count them accurately. At about the same time, at Middle Crwys, near Hendre,



Male Long-horned Bee at Middle Crwys



Tufted Vetch at Kingcoed

where I had found a few in 2016, there was more than double the number this year. The dominant bee-plant there is Bird's-foot Trefoil, which now covers a large grassy field previously grazed by working horses and for many years untreated by chemicals.

I am still in the dark about where the Long-horned Bees are nesting at either location. They are hole-in-the-ground nesters, requiring areas of bare soil, preferably in a bank – a habitat missing from the meadows at Kingcoed, though my search has yet to cover the whole area.

On 3 August I visited again only to find the meadow already mown up to the margins, and no

bees in sight. Not wanting to waste a journey, I followed the footpath into neighbouring Pencarreg Farm where I found rough pasture with thistles providing forage for bumblebees and small ground-nesting furrow bees. On a large area of exposed clay soil, worn bare under cattle hooves, there were from 40 to 50 insect holes large enough to admit Long-horned Bees. The distance from this site to the flower meadow is less than 700 metres, which is about the limit for Long-horned Bees' foraging journeys, according to a recent *British Wildlife* article (Saunders 2018). However, the season was over by then, and I will have to wait until 2019 to know whether I have found the nest site. At least it suggests that farmland adjacent to the flower meadow may have habitats that are important for the survival of the meadow's bee fauna, before and after mowing.

I wish I could also report on the continued success of the Brown-banded Carder Bee (*Bombus humilis*), but I can't. After finding two queens at Kingcoed on 2 June, I found no more bees this year, even when the Tufted Vetch was in flower at the beginning of July.

Unlike Common Carder Bees, Brown-banded Carders are late emerging from hibernation and may still be prospecting in early June. They are field nesters, requiring 'tall but open vegetation structure, allowing the warmth of the sun to penetrate to the base of the grass stems, with a litter layer of dead grass and/or mosses' (Benton, p. 380). The nests reach maturity during August and new queens and males continue to emerge into September. Their life-cycle must have been severely tested in 2018 by the prolonged hot, dry weather. Besides putting bumblebees under heat stress, it also reduces nectar production in the flowers. It certainly shortened the trefoils' and vetches' flowering period, which was effectively over by the middle of July, much earlier than the previous year. The early mowing would have finished any further bee activity.

Other bees, with different requirements, were more fortunate. At Wet Meadow, with Knapweed coming into flower in July, numbers of Red-Tailed Bumblebees (*Bombus lapidarius*) were up from single figures to many thousands by 17 July. More cloud cover and a consequent drop in day-time temperature may have helped. Compared with Kingcoed, the greater variety of flowers at Wet Meadow at this time may explain the greater variety of bumblebees on show, with

different species predominating on different flower patches: Buff-tailed (*terrestris*) on brambles, White-tailed (*lucorum*) on Rosebay and Garden Bumblebees (*hortorum*) on Betony.



Garden Bumble Bee worker

I was also pleased to find, resting on some large logs lying among the flowers, two large hole-nesting solitary bees – a Wool Carder and a Wood-carving Leaf-cutter – proof that leaving a few logs about the meadow has benefits.



Wool Carder Bee at Middle Crwys

References

- Benton, T. 2006 *Bumblebees*, Collins.
- Saunders, P. 2018. The Conservation of the Long-horned Bee in Cornwall. *British Wildlife*, Vol. 29, No 5: 321-7.

Members' Meadows

Our members have meadows of all shapes and sizes, from extensive areas of flower-rich fields such as Blaentrophy Meadows SSSI, to a small patch of min-meadow in the garden. Some are just starting to encourage their wildlife patch, some have land that has been farmed traditionally for centuries. But they all have a common aim, and everyone shares a pride in their own success.

We asked members to send in their meadow achievements this summer, and we have been impressed. Here's a selection, starting with a few First Sightings:

Tim and Julie Moss in Tintern have been visited by an Early-purple Orchid for some years, but for the first time this year it was joined by a Common Spotted-orchid.

Pam and Peter Lloyd at New Grove Farm are used to seeing a wealth of orchids as they live next to Gwent Wildlife Trust's New Grove Meadows, but this is the first year they have seen a Butterfly Orchid.

Rhian Williams-Flew and Alastair Flew have a garden meadow at their home in Penallt, and this year a first Green-winged Orchid appeared, hopefully the first of many in future years.

Phil Pickersgill and Isabel MacDonald found their first Orchid on their half acre meadow in the Olchon Valley. This one is a Heath Spotted-orchid.

Mark Thorneycroft at Beacon Farm found a large patch of Harebells which our Tracmaster driver David avoided when mowing there, and Amanda and Richard Newhouse also had Harebells appear on their steep garden bank in Parkhouse.

We've also had some pictures of 'firsts' that aren't flowers. Sally Simons sent in a photograph of a new visitor to her garden in Monmouth, a Tortoiseshell butterfly on verbena flowers. Belinda Davies of Cwmyoy shared a picture of her first ever haystack, which is very impressive.

Sarah Clay at St Arvans submitted a picture of her glorious meadow, looking very healthy and full of flowers.

We also like to hear about people's progress with their meadows. In 2015 Jon Dunkelman spoke at our spring meeting about his site on The North, and showed



Common Spotted-orchid
(Tim & Julie Moss)



Greater Butterfly-orchid
(Pam & Peter Lloyd)



Green-winged Orchid
(Rhian Williams-Flew)



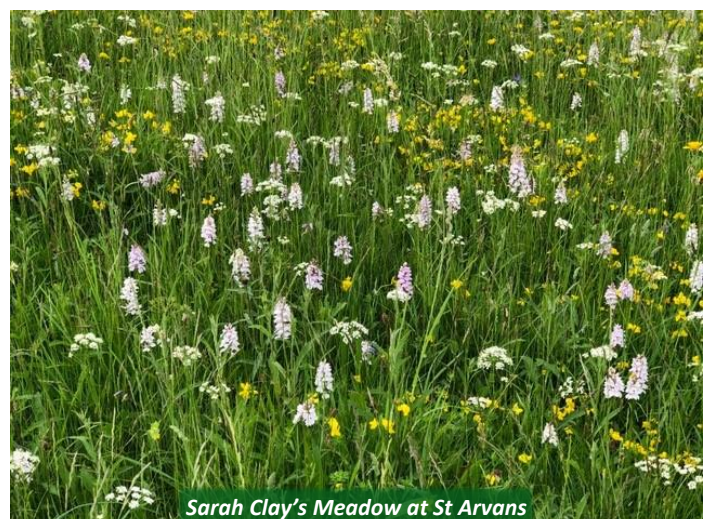
Heath Spotted-orchid
(Phil Pickersgill)



First Ever Haystack
(Belinda Davies)

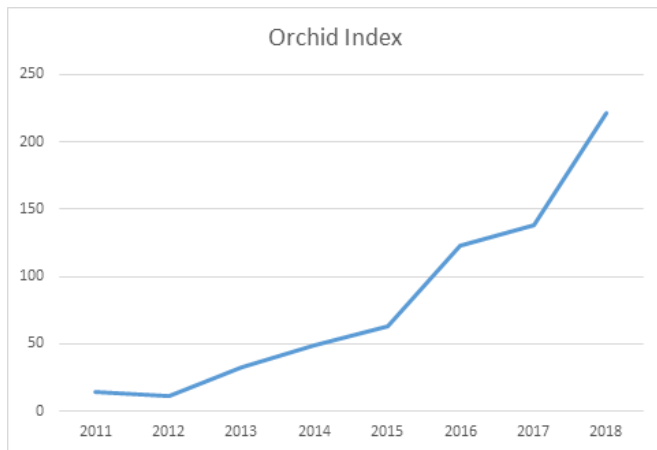


Small Tortoiseshell
(Sally Simons)



Sarah Clay's Meadow at St Arvans

a graph of the increase in Common Spotted-orchids since moving there in 2011. He's sent an update to that graph (below). This year's count is 221, mostly Common Spotted-orchids (204), but a Broad-leaved Helleborine appeared in 2015 and this year they had increased to 16. Other new species of flora, fauna and fungi appear every year - this year's firsts include Burnet Saxifrage, Silver-washed Fritillary and Earthy Waxcap.



Three years ago, David Emerson first reported Green-winged Orchids in his meadow at Leys Hill near Ross on Wye. When the land was purchased twelve years ago it was tussocky and neglected, with a handful of Greater Butterfly-orchids. With the recommended regime of late summer cutting and grass removal plus the addition of Yellow Rattle, they now have six Orchid species, two in significant numbers, including

- about 550 Common Spotted-orchids which started with one orchid eight years ago
- 4 full Southern Marsh-orchids, and now a growing number of hybrids with the Common Spotted-orchids
- 80 Pyramidal Orchids, from the first only four years ago
- From the first Green-winged Orchid, this year 3 flower spikes and 3 more non-flowering rosettes close by
- At least one Twayblade, first spotted last year

David says "Although the Green-winged Orchids feel a little special to us, there's really nothing very special about the meadow, other than perhaps the usual reminder that with the right conditions (we are on limestone), suitable management. and a little time, a good meadow can develop, and orchids at least will find their way in. It's been a very rewarding experience for us, and one that gives much joy – happily enhanced by being with Monmouthshire Meadows for the guidance and sense of shared meadow fellowship!"



Burnet Saxifrage
(Jon Dunkelman)



Silver-washed Fritillary
(Jon Dunkelman)



Green-winged Orchid (left) and Common Spotted-orchids
at Leys Hill (David Emerson)



David Emerson's meadow at Leys Hill

Assessing the Need for a Management Service for Meadow Owners

Many meadow owners and local wildlife site owners rely upon local farmers and contractors, often those that still have small scale machinery, to make hay, mow and 'top' grasslands, control bracken and bramble and generally help with the annual management of these important wildlife habitats. Maintaining the positive management of this network of sites is vital for our wildlife to survive and be able to move through the landscapes of Monmouthshire and the wider Gwent. Anecdotally, it seems that it's getting harder and harder to find people to undertake this work or who still have suitable machinery to do so.

Thus, Gwent Wildlife Trust is investigating an option to help these meadow owners by providing a land management service, utilising the land management expertise and equipment that is currently being used to manage GWT nature reserves. This service would have to cover its costs by charging a daily rate for undertaking the work, like every other business or service, but would do so with an express objective of maintaining and enhancing the condition of wildlife rich sites. This service would likely include grassland management options for topping, bracken bruising, use of flail mow and collect

machinery (an option where hay making is no longer a viable option), as well as other services such as woodland ride management, stock fencing, installing new gates, tree felling, scrub control, hedgelaying, etc. This could include grazing by a 'flying flock' of rare breed sheep. Not a comprehensive list but a flavour of a potential service.

However, as part of a proper business planning approach, GWT would like to assess if there is a market for this approach, before committing to the investment and organisation that will be required to set up and deliver this opportunity. Thus we would like to ask Monmouthshire Meadow owners for your opinion by answering the few questions on an online survey at SurveyMonkey.

Go to: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/2HB5BRZ to take part.

If you have any problems accessing or using this survey, contact Neville Hart at nhart@gwentwildlife.org. who can send the questions direct.

Many thanks for your cooperation and input.

Neville Hart, Living Landscape Manager, Usk to Wye

Hedgehogs: Halting the Decline

Hobo's rescues, rehabilitates and releases hedgehogs in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley area. We have two dedicated hedgehog hogspitals (!) and we also provide advice for other wildlife and work with other rescues specialising in other species. Following a busy season for orphaned urchins/hoglets (young hedgehogs) and the usual variety of injured and sick



adult hogs, our attention now turns to autumn juveniles and hibernation. A hedgehog needs to weigh a minimum of 600 grams to survive hibernation, hogs born later in the season will not make this weight and need to overwinter in rescue.

Please help your visiting hogs by providing a shallow dish of fresh water and maybe consider supplementing their diet by providing a plate of hedgehog or cat biscuits. If you see a hedgehog out during the day, they need help, please ring your local rescue for advice.

The UK hedgehog population is in severe decline, but we can all help. Please consider making your garden wildlife friendly and join thousands of people UK-wide providing hedgehog highways in their gardens, by cutting a small hedgehog-sized hole in any fencing. Hedgehogs travel between 1-2 km per night to feed, one garden is not enough. Please ensure hedgehogs can travel freely between gardens. Please do not use slug pellets in your



garden, slugs form part of the hedgehog diet, so the hedgehog also dies from ingesting those pellets.

Autumn means bonfires. Hedgehogs often make their nests in bonfires so please check your bonfires before lighting. Rescues are very busy with hedgehog burns victims in autumn.

Other potential hazards include strimmers, bird-netting, ponds which cause death and injury to so many hedgehogs, please see The British Hedgehog Preservation Society's website for helpful tips and advice

to make your garden more hedgehog and wildlife friendly.

Any questions or advice please email hoboshedgehogrescue@gmail.com or ring Rosie on 07977 171743 or Carol on 07922 176767. Please note we are entirely volunteer run so may not answer straight away but we will return your call. In an emergency contact your local vet or Vale Wildlife Hospital on 01386 882288. Follow us on Facebook at Hobos Hedgehog Rescue.

Local Wildlife Sites

Many of you will be aware of what a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is, as you are in fact the proud owners of one! For those who don't know, it is worth an explanation and also to reinforce to all why they are so valuable.

Local Wildlife Sites are a way of recognising some of the best places for wildlife locally. They are areas considered to be of particular conservation value because of the habitats or species they support. They are non-statutory but in many cases are every bit as valuable as SSSI's.

They play a crucial role by providing wildlife refuges, protecting threatened species & habitats, and enhancing connectivity by acting as links and corridors between other valuable sites.

We have been surveying and "designating" Local Wildlife Sites in Gwent (chiefly within Monmouthshire) since 2004. There is now a network of 400+ LWS within Monmouthshire with new sites still being identified. The majority of the LWS are grassland with a more limited number of Woodland and Traditional Orchard LWS.

We however recognised that the survey information for quite a lot of the sites was becoming dated so between 2015-2017, through funding by Natural Resources Wales we thoroughly resurveyed 150 of the grassland sites that had originally been surveyed pre-2008. We may well have visited you and if so you will have received updated floral lists for your meadows and management advice to help maintain and enhance your grassland for nature conservation.

Adder's-tongue Fern



Green-winged Orchid



Part of the management advice was the provision of a series of "Habitat Management Toolkits" which were bespoke dependent on the grassland habitat type (meadow, pasture, marshy, acid etc.), additional features (ponds, hedgerows etc.) and management issues (scrub, Bracken, invasive species) etc. present. Downloadable copies of the 14 toolkits are available for everybody at

www.gwentwildlife.org/what-we-do/projects/lws-se-wales-project-completed

The 150 updated surveys covered 322 individual field units all of which were surveyed individually. It was pleasing to note that all 150 LWS were still of LWS quality overall, although a very small number of individual fields had lost LWS quality. This is a testament to the effort the landowners have put in to the sympathetic management of their fields and also the advice, encouragement and in some cases grant support MMG and GWT have been able to provide to the landowners.

Having said this, the surveys did highlight that whilst still LWS quality, there had been noticeable changes in ecological quality of the fields with 51% broadly the same, 27% noticeably reducing in quality and 22% noticeably enhanced in quality. Whilst the enhancements in 22% of the fields is very pleasing, the 27% where quality had noticeably decreased was more of a concern and it was important to try to address this before they deteriorated too much. To this end we analysed each site to see where there were potential management issues as follows:

- Bracken – 61% of the 150 sites had Bracken issues although thankfully these were not too great in most.
- Scrub – 16% of the sites had some scrub issues but only at 3 sites was this a major issue in.
- Invasive Non-Native Species – These were thankfully only present on 7% of the sites and hopefully having been flagged up early can now be controlled.

It is recognised that wildlife conservation may not be the principal driver behind the management of the LWS but it was however flagged up that changes in grazing or cutting regimes could enhance the ecological

value of the grassland as 54% of the individual fields would have benefitted in alterations of this as follows:

- Overgrazed – 92 fields (29%)
- Under-grazed/Need cutting (or at least more frequently) – 62 fields (19%)
- Cut too frequently – 13 fields (4%)
- Other – 6 fields (2%)

The surveys did further reveal the value of the LWS with a very impressive number of floral species being recorded as follows:

	Overall
Grass Species	42
Rush & Wood-rush species	13
Sedge Species	20
Fern & Horsetail Species	14
	89
Flowering Herbs	259
Woody Species	39
Total Species	387

This floral diversity in turn supported a wide variety of fauna, making these sites truly invaluable.

If your site is a LWS and was surveyed originally prior to 2008 and we didn't get round to you, apologies. We do however hope to survey the remaining 110 sites should funding become available.

If your site is not currently a LWS but would like to know whether it is and potentially become part of this network of sites then please contact Andy Karran at akarran@gwentwildlife.org who will be happy to come out and do a survey. Regardless of whether your site is LWS quality, the fact that you are MMG members and care about the grassland you own is great and we are always keen to support you and the work of MMG.

Andy Karran,
Gwent Wildlife
Trust



Devil's-bit Scabious



Ragged Robin

Dates for your Diary

Check our web site www.monmouthshiremeadows.org.uk for details, location maps and updates

Thursday 4th October: MMG stand at an event at Usk Castle hosted by the **Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (WHGT)**. The evening will feature a conversation with William Wilkins CBE, founding chairman of the WHGT, prominent artist and instigator of the Aberglasney Garden restoration amongst many other roles. The evening starts with a tour of the castle and garden at 5.15pm. Tickets for non-members are £12, contact Anthea Prest, anthea@prests.com or phone 01594 531007 or 07887 787953. There's more on the Trust's web site www.whgt.wales

Sunday 7th October: **Gwent Fungus Group** will be holding an open event at Pentwyn Farm in Penallt to mark **UK Fungus Day**. Fungus identification, specimen displays and fungi walks. Open from 2pm to 4.30pm, free of charge. Directions to Pentwyn Farm reserve are on Gwent Wildlife Trust's web site

Tuesday 16th October: Monmouthshire Meadows **Autumn Get-together**, at Abergavenny Community Centre with speaker Ruaridh MacDonald, owner of Blaentrophy Meadows followed by a buffet supper. Details in this newsletter and the booking form is on our web site

Tuesday 16th October: Herefordshire Meadows Group event **Healthy Soil for Healthy Grassland and Healthy Livestock** 12.30pm to 3pm at Upper Pengethley Farm, Peterstow, HR9 6LL courtesy of Julian and Sue Partridge. Booking essential through Herefordshire Rural Hub bookings@herefordshireruralhub.co.uk or telephone 01432 353465. [Details on the group's web site](#)

Gwent Wildlife Trust run events throughout the year: www.gwentwildlife.org/whats-on

Gwent Fungus Group

An open event to celebrate



UK Fungus Day

Sunday 7th October 2018

2 pm to 4.30 pm

Pentwyn Farm Reserve,
Penallt

-  Fungus walk
-  Displays of fungi
-  Bring along specimens for identification
-  Free admission – everyone welcome



Location: Gwent Wildlife Trust, Pentwyn Farm Reserve, Penallt, Monmouth NP25 4SE

Parking: drive past the Inn at Penallt car park, follow the track to the medieval barn. Additional parking by the modern barn by the pub, reached by driving through the pub car park

Please do not park on the village green

www.gwentfungi.org.uk Tel: 07745 840714

Monmouthshire Meadows Group is grateful for all the help both financial and physical given by our members. We are also indebted to the following for their sponsorship and help: **Tom Ward-Jackson of Keep Wales Tidy; Sustainable Development Fund, a Natural Resources Wales initiative in the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); Gwent Wildlife Trust; Monmouthshire Natural Assets Project; Bee-friendly Monmouthshire; Raglan Community Council**



The following sponsors assisted with the purchase of Kingcoed Meadows: **Biffa Award, The Alan Evans Memorial Trust, The Banister Charitable Trust, Foyle Foundation, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Habitataid, Ricardo Crawley Trust, New Grove Trust and Waterloo Foundation.**

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