

Wild North Wales

Spring 2023

The member magazine for North Wales Wildlife Trust

WILD WORKERS

Of grass and grazers

Discover what it means
to manage a meadow

BRINGING NATURE BACK

Our new Trust strategy
towards 2030

WILDLIFE GARDENING

Make space for nature
on a budget



Ymddiriedolaeth Natur
Gogledd Cymru
North Wales
Wildlife Trust

Welcome ... to all our members!

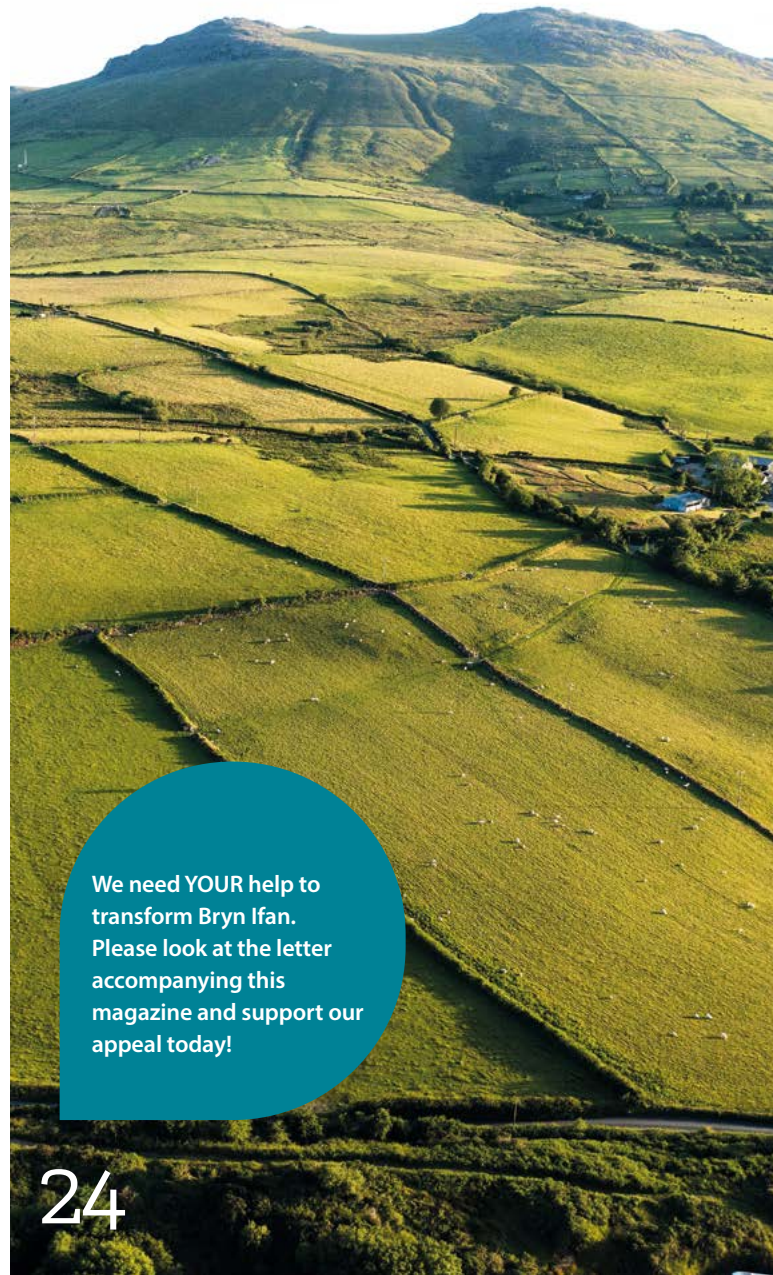


The last time we spoke I mentioned the United Nations Biodiversity Conference and the importance of acting for nature both globally and locally – given that nature is declining at rates unprecedented in human history. One million plant and animal species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades. Thankfully, the Conference ended with a landmark agreement to guide action on nature through to 2030. The plan includes concrete measures to halt and reverse nature loss, including putting 30 per cent of the planet under protection by 2030.

Whilst this is a global target, we at North Wales Wildlife Trust have also made a similar commitment, echoing the urgency and scale of action required to address the nature emergency in our own local area. We have just published our new strategy, with ambitious goals to increase the area of land managed for nature; inspire and empower more people to engage with nature; and highlight the role nature plays in supporting our society and economy – three areas of work that we can only deliver effectively with your support. And whilst our first priority is to ensure that our network of nature reserves is in good condition, we also need to work with others beyond our hard-won borders.

As the Trust enters its 60th year, it feels time to reflect on the past and consider how we rise to the challenges of the future. Your support and continued engagement is vital in helping us do this. Thank you for all you do.

Howard Davies
Chair, North Wales Wildlife Trust



We need YOUR help to transform Bryn Ifan. Please look at the letter accompanying this magazine and support our appeal today!

24

North Wales Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*



**Ymddiriedolaeth Natur
Gogledd Cymru
North Wales
Wildlife Trust**



Email info@northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk

Telephone 01248 351541

Address North Wales Wildlife Trust, Llys Garth, Garth Road, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2RT

Registered charity number 230772

Website northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk

Wherever you are in the UK, your Wildlife Trust is standing up for wildlife and wild places in your area and bringing people closer to nature.

facebook.com/northwaleswildlifetrust

twitter.com/North_Wales_WT

instagram.com/northwaleswildlifetrust

youtube.com/northwaleswildlifetrust

For North Wales Wildlife Trust

Editor Graeme Cotterill

Designer Ian Campbell

Translators Haf Roberts, Bledwyn Williams

Proofreaders Chris Baker, Nia Hâf Jones

For The Wildlife Trusts

Editor Tom Hibbert

Designer Ben Cook

Consultant editor Sophie Stafford

Cover: Grazing horse © Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

Unless otherwise credited, all photographs are copyright North Wales Wildlife Trust.

Our magazine and envelope are printed on paper from responsible sources and are FSC certified.



10



14



4

Contents

4 Your wild spring

The best of the season's wildlife and where to enjoy it on your local patch

8 Wild words

Giving language to the living world's less conspicuous species!

9 Wild thoughts

Simon Barnes explores how plants shape us in the past, present and future

10 Grass roots

... explore the diversity of our UK grasslands

14 Leading by example

We all have a role to play in keeping our nature reserves special places

16 Wild reserves

Why spring is a good time of year to visit these North Wales Wildlife Trust reserves

19 Focus on: Gifts in Wills

Consider leaving your footprint in our landscape forever by leaving a gift to nature

20 Gardening for wildlife

How you can help wildlife this spring

22 My Wild Life

Luke Jones, our newest Reserve Officer, shares his passion for wildlife

24 Our new strategy towards 2030

Seven years to make a difference!

28 Wild news

The latest news from The Wildlife Trusts

BRYN IFAN © GWYN JONES, LARGE BLUE BUTTERFLY © ROSS HODDINOTT, FAMILY WITH DOG © TOM MARSHALL, GANNET © PETER CAIRNS/NORTHSHOTS

6 ways to get involved with your local Wildlife Trust

Volunteer

Could you donate your skills and time to look after wildlife? A wide range of indoor and outdoor tasks need doing. northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/volunteer

Campaigning

You can play a vital role in raising awareness, and lobbying, on local and national issues. northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/campaigns

Receive e-news

In a fast-changing world, receiving our weekly e-newsletter is more important than ever! Sign up today at northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/newsletter

Leave a legacy

Help protect local wildlife and wild places for future generations by leaving a gift in your Will. northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/legacy

Shop

Our online shop stocks a great range of nature-related items. All proceeds go to our conservation work. northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/shop

Events

We offer over 150 walks, talks and family-friendly events each year. Come and join us! northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/events

Your wild spring

The best of the season's wildlife and where to enjoy it in North Wales

SPRING SPECTACLE

Coast and cliffs

The rocky headlands and sweeping bays of the Welsh coastline provide plenty of perfect vantage points for encountering coastal wildlife. Sea-watching may seem like a pastime only for the patient but, at this time of year, it isn't long before a glimpse of movement indicates that there's something special happening just offshore. Spending time scanning the open sea can be therapeutic in itself – especially if you're fortunate enough to catch a chance wildlife spectacle!

Watch out for our largest and most remarkable seabird, the gannet, with its gleaming white plumage broken only by the yellow tone of its neck and jet-black wing tips. Gannets diving like torpedoes into the sea are often indicators that creatures such as porpoises are present, feeding on the same shoal of fish. Sandwich terns can be seen (and heard!) fishing for sand eels, whilst fulmars, stiff-winged in their gracious flight, bank effortlessly through the peaks and troughs of the waves.

Meanwhile, don't lose yourself so much in your sea-scanning that you forget to look down at the spring showcase around your feet. Coastal wildflowers such as vivid yellow gorse, violet-blue spring squill and gentle, pink thrift (also known as sea-pink or cliff clover) provide a patchwork both of colour and smell.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

➤ **Cemlyn Nature Reserve** Head westward from the reserve along the Wales Coast Path to the headland of Trwyn Cemlyn in search of seals, terns and a wealth of coastal flowers.

➤ **Rhiwledyn Nature Reserve** Listen out for stonechats and look out for fulmars nesting on the cliffs of this stunning, steep site just outside Llandudno.

➤ **Uwchmynydd, Aberdaron** Listen out for a chough's 'chee-ow' whilst taking in spectacular views over Barsdey Island.

Thank you

Your Wildlife Trust membership supports our work for wildlife at all our 35 nature reserves – including the coastal ones!

Bluebells at Coed y Felin Nature Reserve

Woodland wildflowers

When it comes to woodland wildflowers, there's one plant that hogs the headlines – and it's easy to see why! Bluebells are undeniably beautiful, carpeting the forest floor in a swaying sea of violet-blue petals. They flower around April and can be an indication that you're standing in an ancient woodland. But they aren't the only wildflowers that grace our woodlands each spring. You could find the ground coated with wild garlic, scenting the air with that unmistakable aroma, or wood anemones with star-shaped flowers balanced atop long slender stalks. Combine these colourful carpets with the soundtrack of singing birds and you have an idyllic spring scene.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

➤ **Coed y Felin Nature Reserve**

Hunt for striking herb-paris whilst enjoying the colourful display lining the paths.

➤ **Nantporth Nature Reserve** The subtle greens of sanicle and common twayblade are as beautiful as the primroses – and sea views!

➤ **Cors y Sarnau Nature Reserve** Bogbean and marsh cinquefoil can both be found where light reaches the wet woodland floor.

© NWWT JONATHAN HULSON

Bumblebee nest

URBAN FIELDCRAFT

Hungry bumblebees

Did you know that it's only the queen bumblebee that survives the winter? She's very hungry when she emerges from hibernation and immediately looks for nearby nectar to give her energy. You may notice her characteristic zig-zag flight pattern as she searches for suitable nesting sites – often holes made by mice or under garden sheds; or those amongst tussocky grass or in bird boxes.

Having built a simple nest with suitable materials, she collects nectar and pollen before laying her eggs on a mound of pollen and wax; keeping the eggs warm by shivering her wings. The first


brood are all female 'workers' – once grown, they'll look after the nest and guard it so that the queen can keep laying eggs to enlarge the colony.

THINGS TO DO:

➤ Make sure that your garden includes flowers, trees and shrubs which **provide nectar throughout the year** – particularly early-flowering plants such as lungwort, pussy willow, winter heather and comfrey.

➤ Enjoy **ID-ing your bumblebees!** Different species have a range of stripes of different colours.

➤ Provide a **range of suitable nesting places**; bearing in mind that bumblebees prefer natural homes to man-made ones.

 Read more about making a difference for bumblebees at northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/bees



SEE THIS

It's spawning season! Keep an eye out for clumps (frogs) or strings (toads) of jelly-surrounded eggs in still, shallow ponds – or even puddles!

HEAR THIS

Listen out for the "wee-chat-chat" call of returning wheatear – and keep an eye out for the prominent white backside after which the bird is named.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Swifts

Summer is coming. The cries of swifts tell us this like no other sound ...

Their high-pitched calls are a well-used ingredient in cinema soundtracks for that reason, but it's possible to confuse the swifts themselves with similar-looking but unrelated speedsters – swallows and house martins. All three species have evolved to hunt insects in the air, hence their pointed wings and forked tails, and all depend largely on buildings for their nest sites.

Uniquely swift

Recorded at 69mph, swifts are the fastest birds on earth in level flight, and their lives are almost completely airborne – they can sleep, eat, preen and mate on the wing. They can even drink from rainclouds! Swifts that nest in North Wales may not touch the ground for the nine months of the year they spend in Africa, and as long-lived birds they can clock up literally millions of miles in a lifetime.

Struggling ...

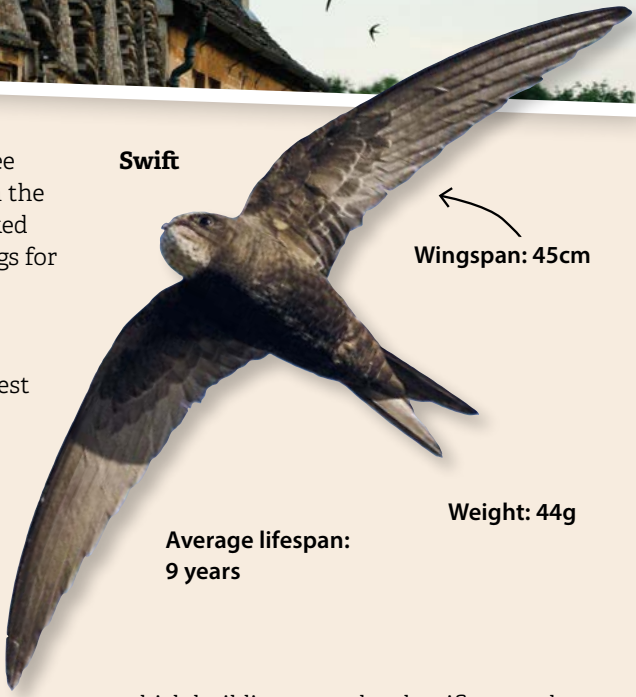
Many of us look forward to the first swift in spring, but their numbers are dropping – in Wales, they're down by 72% since 1995. Their cavity nest-sites get filled in as buildings are renovated (something nest-boxes or swift bricks in new houses can mitigate), but climate change and widespread insect decline are likely additional factors, and ones that may also be hitting swallows and martins. Both swifts and house martins were recently put on a conservation Red List.

A swift recovery

To help swifts, we need to know more about where they're nesting and how they fare from year to year. If you can pinpoint



© NICK UPTON



Swift

Wingspan: 45cm

Average lifespan: 9 years

Weight: 44g

which buildings your local swifts use, please record it on our special web-page: bit.ly/swift_recording. This could help protect nest sites from future destruction, and inform conservation efforts like swift boxes. We can also help by gardening for insects, and encouraging government to support insect-friendly farming.

SEE THEM THIS SPRING

➤ **Swallows** are often the first of the three to arrive. You may see early birds along coasts in March.

➤ **House martins** normally arrive in mid-April. If mud's available, they start re-building their cup-shaped nests straightaway.

➤ **Swifts** may feed up over wetlands before returning to breeding sites – usually in early May.

Top tips SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Swallow Flexible flight. Long tail streamers. Perch on wires and make chattering calls. Nest inside barns or sheds.



© VAUGHN MATTHEWS

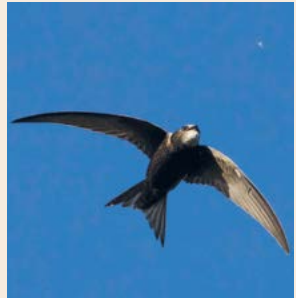
House Martin

Build mud nests under eaves of houses. White rump and belly, forked tail but no streamers.



© MARGARET HOLLAND

Swift Long, scythe-like wings beat stiffly or glide. Appear all dark from below. Screeching calls.



© JON HAWKINS

Christopher Meredith's *Nettles, Cwmorthin* gives voice to the non-human lives rooted in an abandoned quarry village on a lakeshore above Tanygrisiau, Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Nettles, Cwmorthin

Outside the ruin of Tŷ Manijar
they lean tall as men
sedate and dusted in brief sunlight
singing a noiseless air
to the broken houses,
to the high lake:

*We stand where once you cracked your sinews
spring bad flowers
where your boots scraped rock*

*and oh, the heaviness of all your effort
whispers only in the slide of rubble
in capless walls packed Aztec tight,
unpeopled*

*and yes, this song's an irony
a kind of laughing,
each chorus in its season coming back
and always strong and light
and taunting.*

*With no more effort than it takes to be
ourselves
we make each year our feather shape in air,
us subtle flowers armoured in ground glass,
singing in the wake of all your striving,
choking the stone gates where
your children passed.*

from *Still* (Seren, 2021)
© Christopher Meredith

Nettles thrive in sites of human habitation, where there are elevated levels of phosphates and nitrogen in the soil. Humans have used nettles in textiles and medicines, and the plant is now located globally – it could even be argued that the species are interdependent. Is Meredith implying that the nettles in the poem mourn the community that lived and worked in Cwmorthin or celebrate its absence?

Although 'boots scraped rock' and quarrymen 'cracked ... sinews', the 'heaviness of ... all effort' and 'striving' appears now to be a 'ruin' of 'broken houses'. Meredith was once a steelworker in Tredegar – does this poem question the cost of heavy industry to the post-industrial landscape?

The 'singing' stinging nettle speaker of the poem appears to suggest that rewilding is a passive activity for humans – all the natural world requires is an 'unpeopled', 'noiseless air' to exist within. So many images reference the hard physical work of humans, yet the nettle exerts 'no more effort than it takes to be ourselves' to become 'strong'.



Glyn Edwards is a poet, teacher and PhD Researcher. His second book, *In Orbit*, was published by Seren in February. Glyn shared emails with everyone who responded to RS Thomas's *Barn Owl* – thank you to all who wrote in. In addition to a selection of wonderful barn owl-themed work, tawny owls winged-in from primary school students in Conwy, a blackbird made the journey from South Wales and photographs of owl pellets migrated from America! We'd love to read your responses to *Nettles, Cwmorthin* – Glyn is looking forward to reading any poems that consider rewilding or give language to the living world's less conspicuous species! glynfedwards@hotmail.com



Simon Barnes

@simonbarneswild



The plants that shaped us

Perhaps the most exciting thing in life is ignorance. That's because ignorance is an open door: walk through it and learn. And the more you learn the more doors you find, waiting for you to walk through. Until very recently I was shockingly — stupidly — ignorant about plants, considering them just the soft furnishings of the wild world.

But then I realised that, roughly speaking, everything that lives on earth is either a plant or depends on plants. What have plants ever done for us? Well, there's oxygen, water, food...

We humans are as dependent on plants as the cow in the field or the butterfly flying past her nose. Plants are the only living things that can use the energy of the sun to make food. Plants have shaped human history. So I made a list of the significant plants of human history: wheat, rose, potato, tobacco, cannabis, grass, oak... and soon I realised that there was no escape. I would have to write *The History of the World in 100 Plants*. So let's look at two UK plants that made the book.

Edward Stone, an 18th century clergyman, was walking along the river while suffering from ague: probably a rotten, feverish cold. Perhaps his condition had rendered him slightly daft, for he nibbled on a piece of willow bark. He reckoned that, since both willows and fevers are associated with wet places, the one must have been put there to cure the other. And it worked: he got better and wrote a paper to the Royal Society in London.

It worked because willow bark contains salicin. In the 19th century synthetic salicin was developed, and this was adjusted, so that it caused fewer digestive problems. The medicine firm Bayer marketed it — and called it aspirin.

Our second plant is a familiar one. These days the beauty of wild places is obvious to us all, but that wasn't always the case. In the 18th century, a well-tended garden was regarded as the ultimate form of living beauty: cultivated, civilised and tamed. Outside was just wilderness.

That changed at the beginning of the 19th century, when, and not by coincidence, the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic Movement both began. People began to appreciate the glories of untouched, unspoiled nature. The great emblem of that change was the daffodil, as celebrated in the poem by William Wordsworth:

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in
sprightly dance*

The modern understanding of nature as something wonderful and fragile dates back to that time. Wordsworth's daffodils made this understanding vivid for all time.

But there are things to learn about almost every species of plant: the poppies that grow on ground disturbed by ploughs or by bombs, orchids that excite human passions, grape and barley that get us drunk... and on and on and on, because without plants we are nothing. We wouldn't even exist.

Wild daffodils are a beautiful spring sight. Discover some of our best nature reserves for spotting them:

 wildlifetrusts.org/wild-daffodils

THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD IN 100 PLANTS

Simon explores the stories of more of the plants that shaped us in his latest book, *The History of the World in 100 Plants*. As humans, we hold the planet in the palms of our hands. But we couldn't live for a day without plants. Our past is all about plants, our present is all tied up with plants; and without plants there is no future. From the mighty oak to algae, from cotton to coca, discover a hundred reasons why.

Simon Barnes is the author of many wild volumes, including the bestselling *Bad Birdwatcher* trilogy, *Rewild Yourself*, *On The Marsh*, and *The History of the World in 100 Animals*. He is a council member of World Land Trust, trustee of Conservation South Luangwa and patron of Save the Rhino. In 2014, he was awarded the Rothschild Medal for services to conservation. He lives in Norfolk, where he manages several acres for wildlife.

Grass *roots*

Grassland officer **Claire Cornish** explores the diversity of grasslands.



Claire Cornish has spent three happy decades surveying, assessing and restoring swards from Suffolk to Penrith, Ulster to Derbyshire. When she's not restoring meadows, she's celebrating them in her stained glass artwork.

Anyone who's ever gardened will know that, left to its own devices, grass gets everywhere. Leave any area for longer than a fortnight and the fine green shoots will emerge, challenging our attempts at neat borders, vegetable beds and gravel. The same is true beyond our gardens. Grass is a supreme survivor. It can grow in most soils: wet, dry, salty, sandy, or even poisonous. As a result, natural grassland can be found almost anywhere — from the coast to the highest mountain tops.

You might think that two fields of grass are much the same, but there's an amazing variety in the types of grassland you can find. The UK has around 160 species of grass, growing in different combinations, alongside different wildflowers, to produce a range of grassland habitats. A coastal grazing marsh is very different to a chalk grassland or an upland hay meadow.

Some of our richest grasslands can contain dozens of different species of grass and flower in just one square metre.

The main factors that shape the species found on a grassland are whether it's in the uplands or lowlands, and the type of soil it grows on. There are calcareous grasslands on shallow, base-rich soils like those over chalk and limestone; acidic grasslands on sands, gravels, and siliceous rocks; and neutral grasslands on clay and loam soils.

Grasslands and people have a long history, with traditional farming practices like hay cutting and livestock grazing shaping meadows as we know them. The richest grasslands have developed under this sort of management over rocks such as limestone or chalk. They can be found from Scotland down to The Lizard in Cornwall, Northern Ireland across to the Lincolnshire Wolds.



Grazing animals help maintain areas of open grassland



Grasslands are home to rare insects like the large blue butterfly

Full of life

The rich variety of plants is ideal for insects, so healthy grasslands are often buzzing with life. Flowers attract pollinators like bees, beetles and butterflies, offering protein-packed pollen and sugary nectar. Indeed, grasslands are some of our best places to see butterflies and moths, whose caterpillars chomp on the juicy stems and leaves of grasses and other plants. Some species are particularly picky about their grassland, such as the mountain ringlet, found only on montane slopes in the Scottish Highlands and the Lake District.

The abundant insects in turn attract hungry birds and small mammals, like voles. Strong-billed birds such as sparrows, goldfinches and, in some places, twite also feast on the seeds of plants and grasses. The tussocky structure of meadows provides the perfect nesting cover for birds, including skylarks, yellow wagtails, and larger birds too. Redshanks, lapwings, and especially curlews use the tall herbage to hide their nests.

It's a complicated story underground, where the roots of many species grow deep into the soil to find nutrients, using fungi on their root hairs to draw these up into the plant. These are swapped in turn for the sugary products of photosynthesis from the plant's leaves. This kind of relationship is common in low fertility habitats, but is much rarer for grasslands that have had lots of fertiliser applied, and hardly present at all under arable crops. Some old, unploughed and unfertilised grasslands can be home to spectacular displays of colourful waxcaps — tiny, glistening umbrellas of orange, red, green, or pink.

Grass is a supreme survivor. It can grow in most soils

Graze expectations

Left alone, grassland is generally a temporary habitat. Over time it develops into longer grass with brambles or bracken, then scrub, and eventually woodland. These are all important habitats in their own right, but support different species to wildflower-rich

grasslands. To stay grassy and open, most grasslands need the influence of grazing animals. In the UK this comes from a variety of herbivores — rabbits and hares, geese, deer, and more often domesticated goats, sheep, cattle, and horses or ponies.

Grazing can be a by-product of farming for meat and milk, or it can be done purely with wildflower and habitat conservation in mind — sometimes, with the right animals, it can be both. While most grazing will help prevent grasslands developing into scrub, the seasonal timing of grazing and the density of animals play a part in determining the end result. The choice of animal is important too, as different species and breeds have different food preferences and feeding styles. Overgrazing can be very bad for grasslands, preventing flowers from growing and damaging the soil.

Wildlife Trusts across the UK undertake conservation grazing to preserve precious meadows and other vital habitats, using livestock to replicate more traditional farming methods, or the herds of large herbivores that would once have shaped the landscape. This is also a key component of rewilding initiatives, which seek to reinstate natural processes. Allowing animals to roam over a large area and browse or graze at will generally reduces grazing pressure. This intermittent grazing, or light grazing over a period of time, can allow a mosaic of scrub, trees and grassland to develop, providing a wider variety of habitats for wildlife.

The grass is greener on the wild side

Grasslands have a big role to play in battling the climate crisis. They have a huge potential for locking up carbon, thanks not only to the diversity of plants but also their relationship with the fungi in the soil. The UK's grasslands hold two billion tonnes of carbon in their soils, but this carbon can be easily released by human activities. From 1990-2006, 14 million tonnes of CO₂ was released as grassland was converted to arable farmland. It's vital that our grasslands are managed sensitively to lock in carbon and keep it in the soil.

Having healthy fungal networks in the soil also reduces the need for fertilisers, which are often

produced using carbon-emitting manufacturing processes. Deep rooted scrub, trees and grassland are better at combatting field run off triggered by the high intensity rainfall we are all experiencing in our climate emergency. Bare ground left over winter in arable systems has a loose surface that can be swept away into our rivers and seas, carrying with it high levels of nutrients that throw nature off balance.

The UK has around 160 species of grass

Grow your own grassland

The state of grasslands across the UK is in flux. The loss of the basic payment scheme for farmers, dramatic changes in weather patterns and the rising cost of fertiliser and fuel are creating pressure on the livestock industry. Some are opting for smaller animals and lower input systems, some for more ploughing and reseedling, while estates may opt for rewilding options.

The Wildlife Trusts are helping to safeguard and enhance our native grasslands. We are working to restore meadows, both on our nature reserves and with farmers and landowners, as well as introducing wildflowers and pollinator friendly habitat into school grounds and urban areas, and providing inspiration and advice for anyone wanting to change the grasslands in their local area.

Grasslands are so ubiquitous, we often take them for granted. Nearly any grassland, if given the chance, can offer much to the smaller creatures that live near us: the birds, mice and voles, the butterflies, moths, spiders, beetles and flies, not forgetting the tiny soil fauna and fungi that help power the whole system. Even a private garden can make a difference to local wildlife, so let some of your grass grow longer and leave wildflowers to flourish. Try 'No Mow May' in 2023, then sit down for a few minutes and watch your own tiny Eden.

Get tips for making the most of your green space at wildaboutgardens.org.uk

Grassland varieties

Here are just three of the types of grassland you can find in the UK.

Coastal grazing marsh



Occasionally flooded grassland, crisscrossed with ditches of fresh or brackish water, and seasonally grazed by livestock. Perfect for breeding waders and wintering wildfowl.

See it for yourself at:
Howlands Marsh,
Essex Wildlife Trust

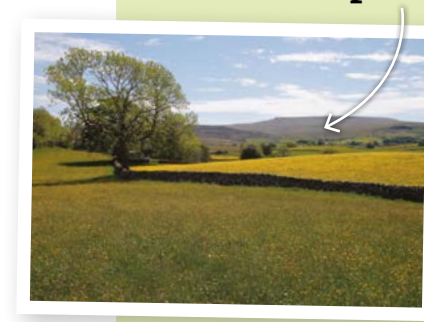
Lowland chalk grassland



Thin, low nutrient soil over chalk rocks promotes a huge diversity of plants. Regular grazing keeps the grass short. Famed for its orchids and butterflies.

See it for yourself at:
Coombe Bissett Down,
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Northern upland hay meadows



Found in sub-montane climates, where non-intensive hay production creates dense grasses and herbs.

See it for yourself at:
Bowber Head Farm,
Cumbria Wildlife Trust



Leading by example

Here at The Wildlife Trusts, we know how important it is that everyone has the opportunity to get out and enjoy nature. Across the UK, we look after around 2,300 nature reserves to help ensure that no matter where you live, you can enjoy a walk on the wild side. But nature can be sensitive. There are animals that are easily disturbed, plants at risk of trampling. Sometimes we have to impose restrictions to keep wild places wild. Our communications recently have had a real focus on getting this message out to the public. We know our members are wildlife lovers that truly care about nature, so we wanted to highlight some of the issues that you're helping us prevent by respecting nature reserves and the special species they protect.



Ground nesting birds like nightjars are especially vulnerable



Fungi can be a feast for wildlife

Paws for thought

Dogs are our most popular pet, with an estimated 13 million in the UK. They bring companionship and joy to their owners. They also lead people to be more active and spend more time in nature, which is great! But unfortunately for both us and wildlife, dogs and nature reserves aren't always compatible.

Even the most mild-mannered of our four-legged friends is still shaped like a predator, and that's exactly how wild animals see them. A dog is a potential threat. Even if the dog doesn't chase birds, squirrels, deer or other animals, its presence can cause them to stop feeding, become stressed, and even temporarily abandon a nest. Many birds nest or feed on the ground, where they're vulnerable. When a dog is off lead and wanders away from the path, it has the potential to disturb even more wildlife.

Man's best friend can directly influence wild places too. Chemicals in flea treatments can leach into ponds, lakes, and rivers, harming wildlife. And dog poo isn't just unpleasant to stand on, it also adds nutrients to the soil. Wee does the same. This can be disastrous for rare plants that are adapted to low nutrient levels. As the soil nutrients increase, these plants are crowded out by nutrient-loving plants like nettles. A recent study on Belgian nature reserves estimated that each year dogs add an average of 11kg of nitrogen and 5kg of phosphorous per hectare. Picking up the poo can reduce these numbers dramatically.



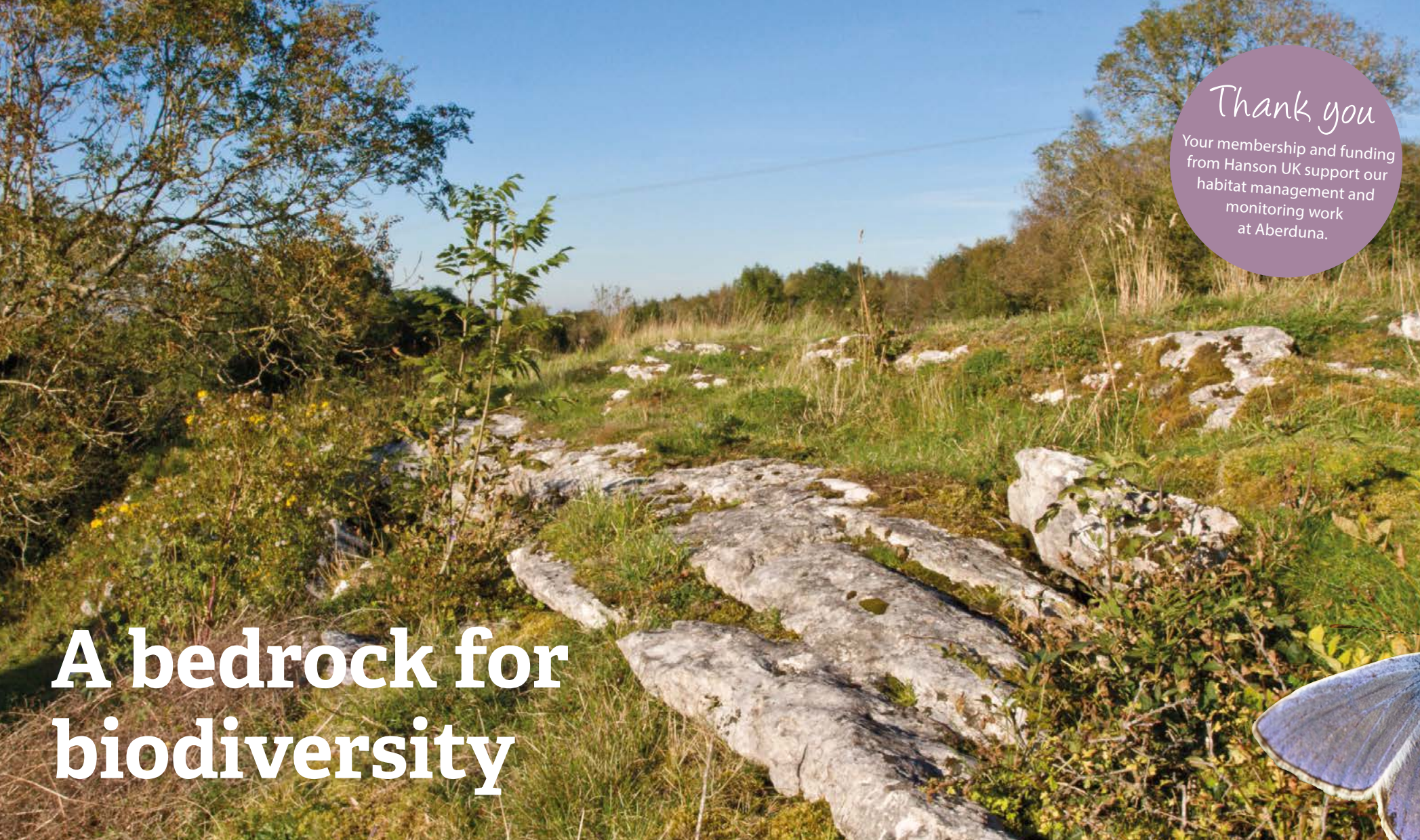
Slim pickings

Last autumn some Wildlife Trusts had issues with gangs of foragers sweeping through nature reserves, gathering bags of fungi. Wild foraging can be fun and useful (if you know what's safe to eat), but it can lead to problems for wildlife and wild places if done too frequently. Picking mushrooms isn't generally bad for the fungus itself, as they're seasonal fruiting bodies, but lots of people roaming in search of them can lead to plants being trampled and ground compacted. There are plenty of animals that feast on fungi too, from flies to mice and deer — so it's important that some are left for nature's foragers.

The heat is on

The Wildlife Trusts' Changing Nature report highlighted that climate change is increasing the risk of wildfires on our nature reserves. Hot, dry springs and summers turn heathlands, grasslands and forest floors to kindling. A single discarded cigarette or a barbecue is all it takes to ignite a blaze that can destroy acres of vital habitat for wildlife. Rare reptiles, protected plants, endangered insects, and ground-nesting birds can all be lost. But these fires don't just harm wildlife, they also release huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere and damage the ability of wild places to help fight the climate crisis. So thanks for packing a picnic instead and helping us spread the message.

We hope this helps explain the need for restrictions in some of our wild places. Many Wildlife Trust nature reserves welcome dogs on leads, but some are so sensitive they need to be dog free entirely — so please check before you travel. Thank you for helping keep our wild places safe and setting a great example for other visitors.



A bedrock for biodiversity

Underlying limestone has paved the way for a wonderful array of fungi, wildflowers, butterflies, bees and reptiles at Aberduna Nature Reserve.



Jordan Hurst

is our Reserves Officer for North-East Wales, working alongside Paul Furnborough. At this time of year, Jordan can be found surveying our nature reserves for anything from reptiles to butterflies!

Forming part of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, Aberduna is an 18-hectare hidden gem – located under a mile from the hugely popular Loggerheads Country Park and less than three miles from Moel Famau. With over 1,000 species recorded, it's a sanctuary for wildlife: no surprise when you consider the variety of habitats found here, including broadleaved woodland, open glades, exposed rock, scrub, neutral and calcareous grassland, bracken and ponds!

This richness is in no small part due to the limestone that underlays the entire nature reserve. Over many years, thin layers of alkaline soil have developed on exposed areas; its pH making it less suitable for generally dominant grass species and allowing a host of less competitive wildflowers to flourish. Later in the year, these grasslands become prime real estate for fungi, including a variety of colourful waxcaps.

Living limestone

It is during the sunny periods of spring and summer when the significance of limestone becomes most obvious to see. Exposed limestone draws in heat from the surrounding environment, and south-facing, sunny areas of exposed rock create literal hot-spots for a wide range of ectothermic species (creatures which rely on environmental temperatures to regulate their functioning) to bask, with



Common lizard

insects and reptiles soaking in the sun to ready themselves for the day's activities.

Once basking butterflies and bumblebees have warmed up their flight muscles, the buzz surrounding the reserve reaches new heights as they descend upon the springtime sea of bluebells, early purple orchids and cowslips; busily flitting from flower to flower as they feed on precious nectar. At this time of year, the ponds also teem with newts, frogs and toads as they become both mating and hunting grounds: later on, newly emerged damselflies and dragonflies will acrobatically dance in the air above, forming flying 'wheels' (known as tandem

DID YOU KNOW The limestone that underlies Aberduna was formed by the remains of marine animals and plants that lived almost **350 million years ago** when this land lay south of the equator under warm tropical seas. It's a lot chillier today!

DID YOU KNOW First acquired in 1993, Aberduna is just one of our 35 nature reserves. Thirty years before that, the Trust was established to look after **Cors Goch** on Anglesey – an acquisition rapidly followed by **Morfa Bychan** and **Coed Cilygroeslwyd**. The newly formed and, for many years, completely volunteer-run organisation soon had its hands full!

linkage) when they've found a mate. And, when they've had enough frolicking in the sun, both insects and reptiles can retreat to shelter amongst Aberduna's swathes of bracken – the dappled shade also creating the perfect conditions for violets to grow.



Some species, such as the speckled wood butterfly, venture further into the shaded woodland; awash with herb-paris, wood sorrel and wood anemone in spring.

However, this buzzing biodiversity hotspot is not self-sustaining. Without management, this rich, exposed

bedrock would become covered by scrub and, eventually, woodland. Aberduna is therefore managed to encourage a dynamic mixture of all these successional stages. We carry out conservation grazing to maintain the grassland, while our hardworking volunteers scythe the bracken to manage its extent and coppice woodland glades to allow the ground flora to flourish. We also monitor key species, including regular butterfly transects and annual great crested newt surveys. In 2023, we are expanding this to include bumblebee walks and reptile surveys, too!

See for yourself

Aberduna is now more accessible than ever before, thanks to the incredible efforts of our volunteers to improve several previously muddy paths! So if you find yourself at a loose end this spring, come and explore – sit amongst the wildflowers, bees and butterflies, and feel your heart swell as you bask in the sun.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

1 Aberduna

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Location: Maeshafn, Mold, CH7 5LD

How to get there: From Mold, follow the A494 through Gwernymynydd, and take the left turning to Maeshafn. Follow Ffordd Maeshafn for ½ mile and, at a sharp bend to the left, turn right at the large NWWT sign to drive up to the office car park. If staff are on site, the gate will be unlocked – *please* inform staff to avoid your car being locked in! Alternatively, park in Maeshafn and follow signs for the nature reserve on the village noticeboard.

Opening times: All day, every day

Access: Footpaths pass through the reserve but can be steep. Exposed limestone rock is very slippery when wet. The terrain is not suitable for prams or wheelchairs.

Phone: 01248 351541

Email: info@northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk

Website: northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/aberduna

TOP WILDLIFE TO SPOT

Bluebell: There aren't many wildlife spectacles as evocative of spring as a bluebell woodland. Look for spikes of early-purple orchid, too.

Common lizards: On a sunny morning, scan the dry-stone wall at the quarry viewpoint to spy lizards basking on the stone. Approach slowly and quietly though, else they'll hear you coming and hide away!

Butterflies: Aberduna's plants support many species' caterpillars. Those of green hairstreak feed on common rock-rose; whilst common blue caterpillars enjoy bird's-foot trefoil.

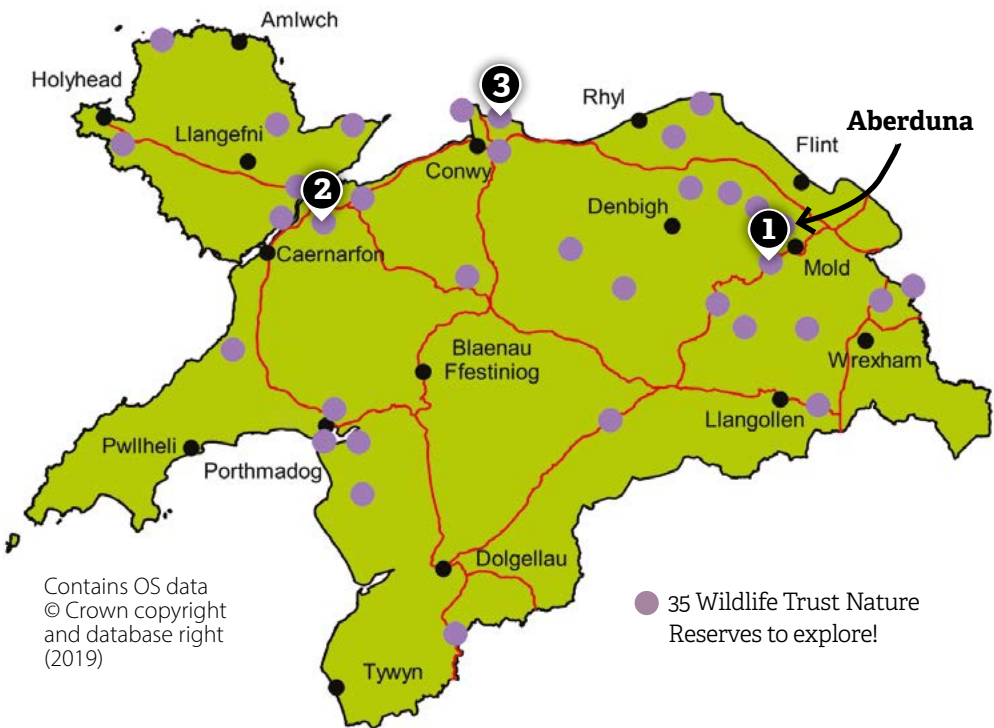
THINGS TO DO

➤ Look for lovely **yellow-rattle** flowers. These plants live a semi-parasitic life by feeding off vigorous grasses, eventually allowing more delicate, traditional species to flourish.

➤ See if you can see all **twenty species of tree** that grow in Aberduna's woodland!

➤ Use our **Wildlife Walks** book to explore the surrounding area. We've designed a 1.8-mile route that includes some lovely insect- and flower-rich habitats on and off the reserve.

More North Wales Wildlife Trust nature reserves for a great **spring day out**



PLAN YOUR VISIT

2 Eithinog

Why now?
Famous for its autumnal fungi, Eithinog's fields are just as colourful (and definitely noisier!) in spring. The hedgerows are filled with the sound of nesting birds, whilst purple-white lady's smock soon gives way to the similarly subtle shades of common spotted-orchid.



Know before you go
Location: Bangor
Open: All day, every day
Wildlife to spot: (in spring) chiffchaff, orange-tip butterfly, dunnoek; (at other times of year) waxcaps, earth-tongues, coral fungi, yellow-rattle, black knapweed, goldfinch, redwing, fieldfare
Find out more: northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/eithinog

The lowdown
Known locally as 'Brewery Fields' after a (sadly no longer extant) local business, Eithinog was threatened by housing development in the 1990s until local people secured its future as a Wildlife Trust nature reserve. Although most scientifically important for its incredible fungal diversity, it has long been valued simply as a wonderful place to walk on the very edge of the city – with visitors enjoying the resident cattle as much as the birds, butterflies and wildflowers! A visit can easily be combined with nearby Nantporth Nature Reserve – our *Wildlife Walks* book (available from our online shop) will help you enjoy both.

PLAN YOUR VISIT


3 Rhiwledyn

Why now?
Gorse and blackthorn provide a beautiful yellow-and-white backdrop to any springtime visit, whilst sheltering small birds – listen out for the trill chattering of goldfinch and linnet as you walk past the bushes that hide their nests.



Know before you go
Location: Little Orme, 2 miles from Llandudno
Open: All day, every day
Wildlife to spot: (in spring) bloody crane's bill, peacock butterfly, dropwort; (at other times of year) spiked speedwell, grayling, chough, traveller's-joy, bee orchid, raven
Find out more: northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/rhiwledyn

The lowdown
Overlooking Llandudno and the Irish Sea, a visit to this limestone-rich reserve brings opportunities to experience the wildlife of land and sea together. Rabbits, emerging tentatively from their networks of tunnels, provide a constant grazing regime – helping to keep the grass short and perfect for wildflowers. Sparrowhawk, peregrine and kestrel are all seen hunting over the site – it's little wonder the rabbits are careful! As you climb higher, the sound of seabirds becomes clearer, with the familiar sound of herring gulls combining with the more unusual cackling of fulmars taking shelter on narrow ledges on the cliffs below.

 Plan your next great day out from all our nature reserves at: northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves

FOCUS ON... Gifts in Wills



Thank you
Every gift in every Will, however large or small, makes a difference to your local wildlife.



The most important document you'll ever sign ...

Why are Wills important?
Did you know that around one third of UK residents die intestate (without a Will) – and that this can cause a host of problems for the loved ones left behind? There is a common misconception that surviving relatives can simply decide how an estate should be divided, but this is not the case – instead, there are strict rules that determine what happens and what is given to whom.

A Will is the only way to ensure that your money, property and possessions go to the people and causes you care about.

KAYE, SWAYNE JOHNSON SOLICITORS

Writing a Will is something that we often put off until tomorrow – despite it often being a straightforward exercise which can take as little as 30 minutes. And even if you already have a Will, is it up to date? Are there any life events that may have changed your priorities? Is your Will signed, witnessed and safely stored in a place your loved ones are aware of?

Our ask is simple: please write a Will to look after your loved ones – then consider leaving your footprint in our landscape forever by leaving a gift to nature.

Why are gifts in Wills important?
Much of the charity sector relies on gifts in Wills to function – an estimated four billion pounds will be left to UK charities in 2023; whilst legacy giving is the second largest source of voluntary income for The Wildlife Trusts. Unfortunately, whilst 40% of charity supporters say that they'd like to leave a gift in their Will,

only around 8% of people actually get around to doing it.
There are many reasons for considering remembering a charity in your Will – for example, a solicitor can advise whether leaving such a gift could reduce the inheritance tax paid on the estate, meaning that your descendants could actually receive a larger sum than they might otherwise have expected. However, protecting nature for future generations is a good reason in its own right – and it's something we can all achieve with a legacy gift to North Wales Wildlife Trust, which both preserves the wildlife on your doorstep and contributes to fighting global climate change.

Act today
Write your Will with one of our free Will-writing partners: northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/freewills

Wildlife Gardening on a Budget

It doesn't cost the earth to make a wildlife friendly garden. Indeed, the less money you spend the better for your pocket, wildlife and the planet.

Rather than buying plants grown in peat-based compost and plastic pots, grow them from seed in your own compost and an upcycled container. Take cuttings and dig up and divide plants to propagate more, and if you have too many why not share them with friends and neighbours who might return the favour? It's a good idea to save seeds rather than buy fresh every spring, but don't forget how good birds are at farming — if you've ever watched a goldfinch feeding on knapweed seed you'll know that half of it ends up on the ground to grow into next year's larder. Look out for berrying seedlings such as holly and hawthorn at the base of fences or other spots where birds like to perch, and — with the landowner's permission — dig them up to grow for free in your garden.

It's not just gardening that can be done cheaply. Want a log pile? Keep an eye out for neighbours doing tree work and ask if you can have a log or two. Want a new bird box? Find instructions online to make your own. Other ways to help wildlife require no money at all: let grass grow long around the edges, avoid cutting back plants and start a nice open compost pile at the end of the garden. Nature costs nothing, we just have to let her in.

Get more tips for helping nature at home from [wildlifetrusts.org/gardening](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/gardening)



Kate Bradbury is passionate about wildlife-friendly gardening and the author of *Wildlife Gardening for Everyone* and *Everything* in association with The Wildlife Trusts.

1



Grow annuals from seed

Pollinator-friendly favourites like sunflowers and cosmos are easy — simply sow in pots of peat-free compost and plant out in early summer.

2



Make new plants from old

Dig up herbaceous plants like nepeta and cranesbills and use an old bread knife to slice the rootball in two, with intact stems. Replant and water well.

3



Take softwood cuttings

Cut 10cm shoots from shrubs like lavender, remove lower leaves and push into pots of moist, gritty compost. Cover with a plastic bag sealed with an elastic band and keep on a bright windowsill for eight weeks.

4



Make a log pile

Neighbours pruning or cutting down a tree? Ask for some logs! Piled up in a corner or beneath a bench they provide an easy, inexpensive habitat.

5



Be less tidy

Let an area of grass grow long, allow leaves to pile up in borders, deadhead and cut back less.

6



Make your own habitat boxes

From bird and bat boxes to hedgehog feeding stations and even "toad abodes", there are plenty of instructions online on how to make your own bespoke wildlife homes.

7



Grow your own bird food

Home-grown bird food is free: avoid cutting back seed-bearing plants like lavender, knapweed, grasses, sunflower and *Verbena bonariensis*, and watch the birds flock to feed from them.

8



Enjoy free gifts from birds

Birds make great farmers. Keep an eye out for holly and hawthorn seedlings, often found at the base of fences or other 'perches'. With the landowners permission, dig them up and plant in your garden!

MY WILD LIFE



Luke Jones

North Wales Wildlife Trust Reserves Officer for Conwy and Gwynedd



I developed an increasingly pressing interest in wildlife

and conservation while growing up, and decided quite early on that I would like to work in the outdoors. While studying at university I joined the Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers society and quickly became a regular – the work felt really rewarding and I enjoyed visiting reserves across mid Wales whilst volunteering with an array of different organisations. It proved to be a great way to get to know your local landscape and its wildlife, and I made good friends that shared similar interests.

Following university, I decided to gain more experience in practical conservation and spent half a year volunteering as a trainee warden at RSPB Mersehead in Scotland – a role which included everything from getting my hands thoroughly dirty to visitor engagement and wildlife surveying. The other trainee warden and I were soon confidently conducting much of the reserve's survey work on our own!

Afterwards, I was able to get a job working with the RSPB as a Curlew Monitoring Officer in Northern Ireland as part of the nationwide Curlew LIFE project. Long hours spent surveying, monitoring and conducting nest protection work paid off with a high number of chicks fledging, giving hope for a turnaround of their severe decline as a breeding species in the UK. I've also been lucky enough to spend a couple of months volunteering on a trail-building programme in Þórsmörk in the mountains of Iceland – overshadowed by the famous, glacier-capped volcano Eyjafjallajökull that caused chaos to Europe's airspace during its eruption in 2010.

In my new role as the Wildlife Trust's Reserves Officer for Conwy and Gwynedd, I am responsible for ten nature reserves ranging from Llandudno to Corris via Porthmadog and the Llŷn Peninsula. The

role is very interesting as there are many different habitats that require unique management, including nationally rare limestone pavement and grasslands around Llandudno; sunny sand dunes at Morfa Bychan; an ex-explosives factory (now a haven for rare bats and reptiles) at Penrhyndeudraeth; and a beautiful temperate rainforest in the Rhinog mountains. Much of my work involves working alongside our amazing volunteers – many of whom have been volunteering with the Wildlife Trust for many years. I'm looking forward to learning more about their knowledge of local wildlife and our reserves that they know so well – hopefully, in time, I can return the favour.

Much of my work involves working alongside our amazing volunteers

Having started in the role in November, I'm looking forward to seeing my reserves in a new light come the spring. On the grassland sites, it'll be exciting to survey the rare wildflowers that we are working to protect, such as spiked speedwell at Rhiwledyn on the Little Orme and greater butterfly-orchids at Caeau Tan y Bwlch. Having never seen a nightjar before, I'm particularly keen to see them returning to the air at Gwaith Powdwr – alongside the reserve's rare lesser horseshoe bats!



Volunteers at Rhiwledyn Nature Reserve

Why I volunteer

Our staff rely on the help of our amazing volunteers to manage our 35 nature reserves. But what motivates people to take part (apart from Luke making biscuits and cakes for the volunteers)? Here's what three of our regulars have to say ...



Zak, 16

As I'm looking to pursue a career in practical conservation, I volunteer to gain valuable practical

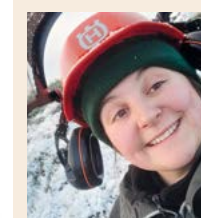
experience in a beautiful outdoor setting. I've learned so much and it really feels like I'm making a difference – and I've met so many nice people on the work parties!



Nick, recently retired

Retirement from an office job meant that all of my time was free. Volunteering for the

Wildlife Trust means that I can combine spending more time outdoors with enjoying a real sense of achievement. My fellow volunteers are a welcoming and happy bunch and time really flies as we're having fun!



Mia, 20

I began a year-long placement with the Wildlife Trust in September 2022 – it's part of my Ecology degree

at Bangor University. I spend most days out and about on reserves helping with practical conservation work, and I love the fact that each day is different – I can be knee deep in a fen one day and working in the snowy mountains the next.



Volunteer. If you're thinking of volunteering but haven't taken the plunge yet, why not register your interest today! northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/take-action/volunteer

Bringing Nature Back

North Wales Wildlife Trust's Strategy 2030: 7 years to make a difference



Graeme Cotterill

is North Wales Wildlife Trust's Head of Strategy and Operations. In a previous life, he was a lecturer in music – and an expert on the Welsh composer, Grace Williams.



The Welsh Beaver Project has been investigating the feasibility of bringing wild beavers back to Wales since 2005.

I recently found myself re-reading the previous issue of *Wild North Wales* and turning again and again to the amazing imagery conjured up by RS Thomas and briefly analysed in 'Wild Words'. It made me think, in fact, of the title of another collection of Thomas's poems, *Song at the year's turning* – a turn of phrase which seems to capture the idea that there is something important about temporal crossroads: important enough to be worth singing – or writing – about; an acknowledgement that change, for better or worse, is afoot.

As I write now, change feels very much in the air. Although you won't read this until April, there is still January snow outside my window. Small, bright birds are still easily visible amongst the bare boughs overhanging the tree-lined lanes to and from my Denbighshire village home; the daffodils I planted in late autumn are just emerging from the frozen soil; and, less poetically, my warming winter woodstore is looking seriously diminished! Meanwhile, the Wildlife Trust sits astride 2023 looking both backwards and forwards – celebrating the fact that we've worked for wildlife for 60 years; mourning the recent loss of John Harrop, our last founder member; filled with excitement about a forthcoming land acquisition; and daunted by the spiralling threats that the natural world we care about still faces.

Facing the front

Despite our concerns for the future, we are emboldened by the support of you, our members; our amazing volunteers; the staff who time and time again stride willingly beyond the call of duty; and even those no longer with us whose living legacies continue to make their marks on our wonderfully wild landscape. We are also strengthened by a new strategic plan for 2030 – *Bringing Nature Back* – and have every intention of ensuring that what could otherwise feel like a dry document full of "history's sterile dust" (credit to RS Thomas once again) will instead be transformative for the wildlife, wild places and people of North Wales alike.

Perhaps like every strategy under the sun, ours contains the usual mix of buzzwords – we have a vision and purpose; corporate values and beliefs; and series of impact measures and milestones. But we also have very clear goals – and, underpinning them, real actions that we'll take to bring wildlife back. And I always find it encouraging to think that the steps we're taking are, genuinely, new – the outworkings described overleaf could scarcely have been imagined by the Wildlife Trust of 2003, let alone that amazing, fledgling organisation of 1963; newly forged from the certainty of a core group of volunteers that, amongst other things, preventing an Anglesey fen from being turned into a landfill site was a cause worth fighting for.



John Milne Harrop MBE, 1932–2023
A short obituary by Mal Ingham

John was born at Garthgynan, near Ruthin – the same family home where he peacefully passed away 90 years later. His funeral on 2 February came 60 years to the day after attending the inaugural meeting of the North Wales Naturalist Trust in 1963, and John remained a staunch supporter of the now-Wildlife Trust throughout his life – including, in 2018, gifting Graig Wylt Nature Reserve. His passion for wildlife had taken him around the world, but he also served on numerous local committees – not just those of the Wildlife Trust, but of RSPB and Snowdonia National Park, too.

Whilst I feel the loss of my dear friend keenly, it was an honour to have been a pallbearer at his funeral: the church overflowing with people from far and wide wishing to pay their respects to this remarkable man. I shall miss our many exploits and discussions on all things wildlife; and my thoughts are with all those who knew and loved him.

We need YOUR help to transform Bryn Ifan. Please look at the letter accompanying this magazine and support our appeal today!

Goal 1 Nature in North Wales is in recovery, with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder land and seascapes where people and nature thrive

Our work under this heading is, unsurprisingly, very varied! We'll continue to own and manage our nature reserves; focus on specific species and habitats under threat; and work with partners to drive change in the wider landscape – after all, the scale of ambition required to see 30% of North Wales actively managed for nature's recovery by 2030 requires us to facilitate changes subsequently implemented by others as well as acting for ourselves. But we're also taking brave strides forward into new territory – and nowhere more so than in our acquisition of land at Bryn Ifan, near Clynnog Fawr and Caeau Tan-y-bwlch Nature Reserve on the Llŷn Peninsula.

At first glance, taking on Bryn Ifan may seem to be little more than standing in the tradition of acquiring new nature reserves of which we're rightly proud. Yet take a step back for a moment, and the scale of the undertaking becomes apparent: an increase in our

landholdings of almost 25% in a single swoop; responsibility for one of the last remaining marsh fritillary colonies in North Wales; the aim to eventually re-establish a 80ha temperate rainforest; and the need to do all this through genuine partnership with the local farming community, where ties to the land are real, and strong.

We see an incredible opportunity to bring parts of a truly iconic landscape into a balance for nature and regenerative agriculture that will help inform a positive future for farming in Wales. Together with those who farm and know the area so well, we aim to develop Bryn Ifan's capacity for both wildlife and food production: supporting the natural world, the local economy and farming culture.

Our vision is of a thriving natural world, with wildlife and natural habitats playing a valued role in addressing the climate and ecological emergencies, and people inspired and empowered to take action for nature.

Goal 2 People in North Wales are taking action for nature and the climate, resulting in better decision-making for the environment

If Goal 1 is to be achieved, it cannot happen without people taking action – even the withdrawal of active management ('re-wilding' or similar) will most often be the result of a conscious choice. Furthermore, the actions people can take – with or without our help – will vary hugely: everything from volunteering on a nature reserve to wildlife gardening, via developing the next generation of environmental

leaders, represents a pro-environmental decision. Ultimately, we want to see a minimum of one in every four people in North Wales being inspired to act for wildlife; becoming the change-makers needed to transform our shared, wider society.

Perhaps the biggest shift that we need to take, however, if long-term societal change is to be achieved, is a pivot towards an approach known as 'community organising'. It's difficult to summarise this in a sentence or two but, rather than (or, at least, as well as) inviting individuals to volunteer to support work programmes driven by us, we'll empower a base of local people who want to achieve *their* nature-based goals within their own communities. We'll develop their skills and confidence, helping them to initiate and deliver conservation projects that will help nature flourish where they live and work.

We're already piloting this approach in the communities of Corwen (Denbighshire) and Gronant (Flintshire). Keep an eye out in the pages of this magazine for updates on what local residents are achieving for wildlife in their own back yards.

Our purpose is to bring wildlife back, to empower people to take action for nature, and to create a society where nature matters.

Goal 3 Nature in North Wales is playing a central, valued role in helping to address local and global problems

Goals 1 and 2 are, broadly speaking, within our own gift to deliver; with success being visible on the ground in North Wales. Yet we know that our small, beautiful part of the world is also subject to the whims and actions of others – whether in Cardiff, Westminster, Davos or beyond. In the years to come, we can be certain that we'll be trying to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change; as well as demonstrating our own commitment to reach 'NWWT Net Zero' by 2030 and showcasing the benefits of nature-based solutions to such shared challenges as the climate crisis, human ill-health and food security. Indeed, we'll be increasingly looking to robustly measure the wider benefits that a wilder North Wales can bring – no small task, given that our primary concern remains the act of bringing wildlife back itself.

One of the most transformative projects that we'll be trying to deliver over the next seven years concerns our Anglesey


Fens Living Landscape area – the land and people influencing (and influenced by) the Anglesey Fens Special Area of Conservation, including our own Cors Goch National Nature Reserve. If funding can be secured, many of the benefits will sit nicely under Goals 1 and 2, with improved prospects for species varying from the iconic (barn owl, otter, brown hare) to the little-known (medicinal leech, southern damselfly, narrow-leaved marsh-orchid) accompanying a wide-ranging engagement programme designed to inspire actions for wildlife amongst local people.

Yet delivering our aims for wildlife will also reduce the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere by the land we want to influence. We haven't yet attempted to quantify the difference we'll make in the Anglesey Fens, but it's sure to be dramatic – and will provide a useful case study of the multiple benefits of conservation work for decision-makers to consider.

Together, stronger

Bringing Nature Back is the culmination of both our 60-year history and much more recent events – not least the appointment of Craig Bennett, our recent Lacey Lecturer, as CEO of The Wildlife Trusts in April 2020. We are absolutely determined that it won't be a vision that sits on a shelf; ignored in the day-to-day hustle and bustle of our existing commitments. But for it to avoid this fate, it'll need all of us to pull together and focus on the goals it sets out: rising up as one to meet the challenges inherent in them and facing down anything that opposes us – not with hostility, but with the courage of our convictions. The Welsh football team made 'Together, stronger' a mantra for their transformation over the past 10ish years – together, we can use the same spirit to bring to bring wildlife back to a thriving, natural North Wales.

Altogether, now: "Ry'n ni yma o hyyyyyyd"

 **Download** your copy of *North Wales Wildlife Trust's Strategy 2030: Bringing Nature Back* from northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/strategy-2030

WILD NEWS

All the latest regional and national news from The Wildlife Trusts

The Irish Sea is extremely important for marine megafauna, such as whales, dolphins, sharks and rays, turtles and seals because of its rich and productive waters.



LIVING SEAS

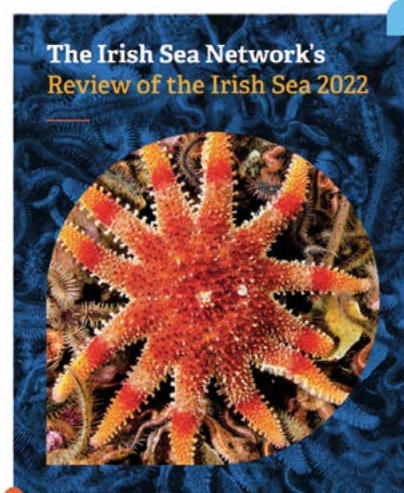
Turning the tide on the Irish Sea

Over several years, North Wales Wildlife Trust have joined Wildlife Trusts from five other nations to find solutions to the challenges faced by wildlife across the Irish Sea. Surrounded by Scotland, England, Wales, the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland (as well as the Republic of Ireland) and subject to the individual policies, laws and positions of each jurisdiction, it's a challenging and complex area to manage – but one which is ecologically rich and diverse, and of considerable social and economic importance to the people and coastal communities that surround it.

The Irish Sea Network have recently produced their *Review of the Irish Sea 2022* – a document which serves as a baseline assessment to be used by decision-makers when considering the management of activities in the region. It's a crucial, timely evaluation: the Irish Sea is already under significant pressure from climate change, development, shipping, aggregates, recreational activity and pollution; and it's only getting busier. It's more vital than ever to consider cumulative effects and take a

collaborative approach across the region – especially as, despite the fact that 36% of the Irish Sea is designated as a Marine Protected Area (MPA), only approximately 5% has any meaningful management in place and less than 0.01% is fully protected.

The review sits alongside a 2030 vision for a “healthy and resilient Irish Sea, enabled by collaborative, cross-national action; where marine wildlife and blue carbon habitats thrive, supporting multiple environmental, social and economic benefits.” Beneath this lie joint, inter-nation position statements addressing the need for strategic and effective marine planning; well-managed and ecologically-coherent MPAs; sustainable fisheries; and nature-based solutions to the challenges facing society – all under-pinned by a series of calls to action. And whilst the review itself – at 80 pages – is perhaps too long for many of the 15 million people living around the Irish Sea to absorb in full, the mere 6 pages of the vision document are well worth a read – or even sharing with others?



Head to <http://bit.ly/3xs4HZ1> to find out more about the Irish Sea Network and download any of the documents mentioned in this article

BASKING SHARK © ALEXANDER MUSTARD 2020/VISION

Thank you
... to everyone who
has donated so far.
You're making a
difference!



© GWYN JONES

SUPPORT US

Please support our Bryn Ifan Appeal!

If you haven't already, please take two minutes to read the letter and leaflet that, if you're reading this in April 2023, you'll have received alongside this magazine! We've tried to explain a little bit about why the second-largest land acquisition we've made since our foundation sixty years ago is also the most exciting – and why we need your support so urgently to help nature prosper on this 450-acre gem of an upland farm.

Remember:

- At Bryn Ifan, we can bring food production, forestry and nature conservation together once again –

uniting wildlife management and regenerative agriculture in a shared, iconic landscape.

- We can restore habitats for rare butterflies, ferns, flowers and more – marsh fritillary, otter, grasshopper warbler and the flora and fauna of the Celtic rainforest can all flourish with your help.
- Only by working in partnership with local farmers and communities can we – and you! – bring wildlife back to North Wales.
- We can't do it without you! Over the next five years, our investment in Bryn Ifan will amount to over £2.1m – but could you help us raise an initial, amazing £75,000 in this, our 60th anniversary year?



Double your donation by visiting northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/bryn-ifan-appeal **between 20 and 27 April!**



© NWWT

Did you know that the Wildlife Trust operate several retail outlets? Our **Great Orme** shop sells a range of branded gifts, clothing, books, toys, confectionary and cold drinks; our kiosk at **Breakwater Park**, Holyhead, sells a small range of gifts alongside plenty of hot and cold drinks, ice cream and snacks; whilst visitors to **Bangor** can pop into our Llys Garth headquarters or our concession in the 'Wild Origins Eco-shop' (run by Wild Elements) in the Deiniol Shopping Centre.

Our shops help us to raise extra revenue to support our vital work – why not pay one a visit?

Together
we're stronger

Our Seagrass Ocean Rescue project in numbers!



10ha
of seagrass meadow
planted ...



... which is equivalent to
18 football pitches!

Thank
you!

5,000,000
seeds collected and re-sown

48
Ocean Rescue
Champions

Endless opportunities
to get involved
northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/seagrass-ocean-rescue



Planting for the future

The Wildlife Trust helps a wide variety of community groups and schools realise their dreams to create biodiverse, wildlife-rich green spaces that are easily accessible to local people. It may come as a surprise to read that winter is a particularly busy time for this kind of work – especially when it comes to planting trees and hedges!

Our Education and Community Officer in north-west Wales, Anna Williams, recently helped Ysgol Rhosgadfan plant a mini woodland with a mixture of native trees raised in our own tree nurseries at Gwaith Powdwr and Aberduna Nature Reserves. Anna had actually worked with the school before – planting

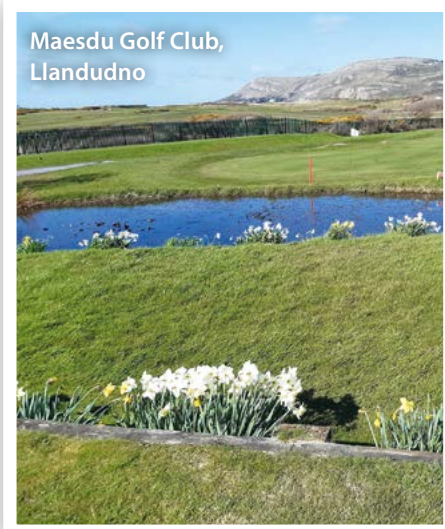
an orchard 8 years ago which is now thriving and producing a plentiful harvest – and writes: “It’s encouraging to see schools and communities wanting to do their bit for climate change; creating a dynamic outside space where pupils can learn about our precious local wildlife and plants.”

This project was enhanced by working alongside Literature Wales and a creative writer, Iola Ynyr. The planting had a profound effect on participating local families, who fed back that they had felt ‘grounded’ in a deep connection with the land; whilst wider life felt ‘lighter’ as a result of enhancing their local landscape.

NATURAL PARTNERS

Eagles, birdies and beyond ...

We’re delighted to welcome Maesdu Golf Club, Llandudno, into our Natural Partners fold. Our Living Landscapes Manager, Adrian Lloyd Jones, was able to visit and offer a host of practical suggestions to help them improve habitats on and around the golf course. We were delighted both to have such a positive reception and see that many of the practices which the club have already introduced are themselves having a beneficial impact on wildlife. We hope to support the club to encourage new species, such as bats and owls, onto the course in the coming months!



Interested in our Natural Partners scheme? Register your interest at northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk/corporate-support



Join the UK’s biggest nature challenge and get close to nature at home, at school, or even at work!

From little actions like stopping to smell a flower or taking a moment to watch a bee, to big things like giving up single-use plastics for a month or pledging your support to a nature campaign, 30 Days Wild is all about connecting with the natural world around you. You’ll be doing something great for wildlife at the same time, too.

Keep an eye on our social media and *Wild Weekly* e-newsletter to find out how to take part – and why not share the good news with family, friends, colleagues and anyone else who might enjoy a little bit of wild in their day?

Sign up to receive your free pack at wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild



UK NEWS



A year of exciting marine sightings included a species completely new to science. *Pseudumbellula scotiae* is a deep-sea coral that was discovered 240 miles off Scotland’s west coast, at depths of up to 2,000m in the Rockall Trough. There were also several species spotted in UK waters for the first time, with Cornwall Wildlife Trust volunteers discovering the first official record of a sea slug named *Babakina anadoni*. Another sea slug found in Cornwall, *Corambe testudinaria*, was also new for the country, whilst Manx Wildlife Trust recorded the first ever swordfish off the Isle of Man.

Whales and dolphins delighted people from Scotland to Scilly, with sightings of pilot, fin, minke, and humpback whales showing how populations are recovering following bans on commercial whaling. Two new orca calves were spotted off Shetland in January, whilst volunteers recorded over 80 sightings of minke whales off the Yorkshire coast in a single morning in August. Monitoring by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust also suggests that bottlenose dolphins are now present off Yorkshire year-round.

In more distressing news, seabird colonies around the UK were devastated by our worst ever outbreak of avian flu,

caused by intensive poultry farming. Tens of thousands of seabirds were killed by the disease, including terns, gulls, gannets, and skuas. Research shows that as much as 13% of the UK population of great skuas — 8% of the global population — have died.

Unfortunately, avian flu was just one of the issues putting pressure on our sensitive sea life. There were multiple reports of people disturbing marine animals, from jet skiers ploughing through colonies of seabirds to beachgoers distressing seals by getting too close. Pollution continued to be a major problem, with several oil spills including 500 barrels leaked from a cracked pipe off North Wales. A study of dead Manx shearwaters on Skomer island found the majority had eaten plastic, with adults feeding pieces to chicks. Scientists fear that 99% of seabirds may have plastics in their stomachs by 2050.

However, it wasn’t all doom and gloom for our seas, as Wildlife Trusts embarked on many projects to restore coastal habitats. These wild places often have a vital role to play in sequestering and storing carbon, as well as sheltering wildlife. Several Wildlife Trusts started projects to plant seagrass meadows, which can absorb and store carbon up to

35 times faster than tropical rainforests. Essex Wildlife Trust created a toolkit for restoring saltmarsh, another key habitat, to inspire and guide similar projects around the UK.

The UK will become the first nation to produce a complete map of its blue carbon stores. The Blue Carbon Mapping project — led by the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) in collaboration with The Wildlife Trusts, WWF and RSPB — has begun the task and will publish results this summer.

Wildlife Trusts also helped empower young people and local communities to save our seas. Projects ranged from art students cleaning beaches with Durham Wildlife Trust, to Cheshire Wildlife Trust training teachers to deliver lessons on wildlife in the Dee Estuary.

Discover more about these and other stories in our full 2022 marine review: wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-2022



UK UPDATE

The Great Big Nature survey launches

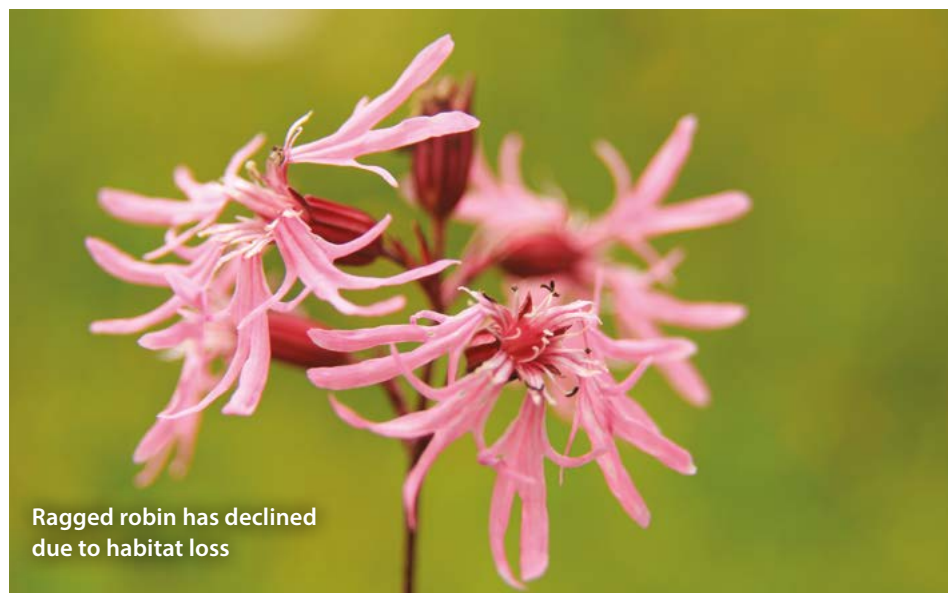
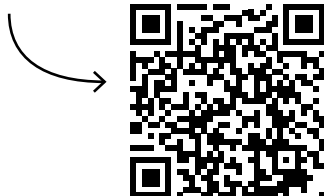
To help us understand how much nature matters to you, The Wildlife Trusts are launching The Great Big Nature Survey this spring. We want to hear your views on some of the most important issues affecting nature and wildlife, and your relationship with the natural world. How often do you get out into nature? Should people try to control nature to better protect it? How important are green spaces to you? What roles should people, business, and government have in looking after nature? Should local communities be at the centre of nature conservation on their doorstep?

Whatever your views on nature, however important (or not) it is to you, make your voice heard by taking The Great Big Nature survey today. With respondents from a variety of backgrounds and with many different experiences in and views

of nature and wild places, The Great Big Nature Survey will reveal what people in the UK and islands really think about nature and how we, as a society, should protect it. Results will also help The Wildlife Trusts to hold governments to account over environmental policies and priorities.

After you've completed the survey, why not share it with your friends and family?

Take the survey at wildlifetrusts.org/great-big-nature-survey or scan the QR code



Ragged robin has declined due to habitat loss

Plotted plants

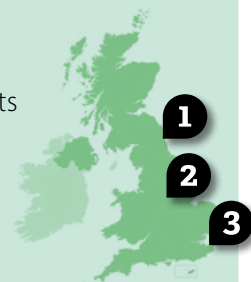
The Wildlife Trusts are co-sponsoring production of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) Plant Atlas 2020, which is published this March. The Atlas is based on more than 30 million records collected by thousands of botanists between 2000 and 2019, providing

an unrivalled picture of the changing distribution and fortunes of plants in Britain and Ireland. This knowledge is likely to provide evidence to help us protect nature across the UK.

Find out more bsbi.org/atlas-2020

UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



1 Hen party

The Northumberland Hen Harrier Protection Partnership, of which Northumberland Wildlife Trust is a member, announced a bumper breeding year for hen harriers in the county. Last year the partnership monitored nine nests, seven of which were successful — fledging a total of 26 chicks. This is eight more than in 2021 and brings the total since 2015 to 106 fledged birds.

wtru.st/26-harriers

2 Give peat a chance

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has been awarded a £100,000 Discovery Grant by Natural England to protect and restore the county's peatlands. Peatland is a vital habitat, not just for wildlife but also for storing carbon. The grant will allow the Wildlife Trust to identify mechanisms to restore the region's peatlands, so they can absorb and lock away carbon.

wtru.st/Derby-peat-grant

3 Mr Blean

Kent Wildlife Trust has welcomed a male bison into the herd at West Blean and Thornden Wood. The bull's arrival was delayed by post Brexit complications, but he has now joined the three females that were released in July, and the calf born in September. The bison have 50 hectares to roam as part of the Wilder Blean Project, a joint wilding initiative.

wtru.st/bison-bull

