



**Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire**



wildlifebcn



Pic: Laura Downton

WildPlaces

A Newsletter for Owners and Managers of Wildlife sites

www.wildlifebcn.org

2014

Welcome to the sixth issue of the Wildlife Sites Newsletter. This newsletter is for owners and managers of Bedfordshire's County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and potential CWS. CWS are areas of land where species and habitats flourish because of past and current management and are the most important areas for wildlife outside of legally protected sites such as SSSIs. There are 402 CWS in Bedfordshire - these cover roughly 7% of the county's area—and create a network of habitats across the county. They do not have statutory protection and it is through the goodwill of their owners and managers that the sites are conserved and retain their wildlife value.

Inside this issue

Butterflies on the Brink update and case studies	2-3
Rural Development Programme Update	4-5
Coronation Meadows and Chiltern Scrub Bash	6-7
Traditional Orchards and CFE	8-9
BSBI Plant Atlas 2020	10
Cut&Chew and Contacts	11-12

Butterflies on the Brink update

The Butterflies on the Brink project has been running over the last 2 years with funding provided by Biffa Award. The project has helped to restore seven meadow sites in the Totternhoe area by implementing practical restoration work to try and secure their long-term conservation. Within that time survey work and management plans have been drawn up over the summer and the majority of capital works undertaken in the autumn and winter.

The huge success of this project has propelled the Wildlife Trust to look into expanding this project to cover a wider area with the focus again being on County Wildlife Sites.

Case Studies;

Wentworth Fields The Wildlife Trust were successful in securing funding, on behalf of the landowner, for the purchase of 4000 bare rooted shrubs/trees from the Community Tree Trust, to plant a hedge along 800 metres of this site. Eventually this hedge would help to screen this species rich grassland from pesticide spray drift from the adjacent agricultural fields. The funding was provided by the Chiltern Conservation Board's small grants fund.

Blow's Down hayfield; Wildflower seed was collected from a donor SSSI meadow in Luton using a seed harvester. After the Blow's Down hayfield had been harrowed, the seeds were spread to enable some of the wildflower species that had been lost to re-colonise the site.

Stevington Meadow; This field along with the surrounding land adjacent to the River Great Ouse has come into Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme. This scheme is helping to fund fencing work on this CWS to enable cattle grazing and scrub removal work is also being carried out.



©Laura Downton
Wentworth Field

Rural Development Programme Update

We are currently in the transition period between Rural Development Programmes.

The old Single Farm Payment will be replaced by a new Direct Payment Scheme made up of a basic payment, a payment for greening and a further payment for young farmers. This scheme will be implemented in 2015. 30% of the direct payments will be made under greening, which will focus on crop diversification, maintaining permanent grassland and Ecological Focus Areas (EFA) (5% of arable land) – which will feature buffer strips etc. It's hoped that CFE voluntary options can add further wildlife benefits. From 2015 if you are eligible to be part of the 'young farmers scheme', you will receive an additional payment. The payment will be approximately 25% of your payment under the Basic Payments Scheme for each of the first 5 years.

The new land management scheme, now called Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS), is not due to start until January 2016, although some elements of the CSS, woodland creation grants and water capital grants, can start in 2015. Applicants for the CSS will be able to produce applications in 2015. CSS will encompass the previous Environmental Stewardship Scheme, English Woodland Grant Scheme and Catchment Sensitive Farming. All of these schemes are now closed to new applications.

CSS will have 3 main elements, Higher Tier (similar to the current Higher Level Stewardship), Mid Tier (which will replace Entry Level Stewardship) and a lower tier of capital grants, including the Hedgerows and Boundaries Capital Grants (HBCG). The HBCG is separate to the capital grants offered through the Higher Tier or Mid Tier. The grants available through the HBCG are for certain works on, for example, hedges and boundaries, tree health issues, woodland management plans and woodland creation establishment. New in 2016 will be the Wild Pollinator and Farm Wildlife Package, which is a specific group of management options that benefits wild pollinators, farmland birds and other farm wildlife. This package will help support the government's National Pollinator Strategy.

County Wildlife Site work is not all about surveying and monitoring, the second important reason for running the Wildlife Site system is to help land managers to maintain or improve their sites for wildlife, by providing free advice and information. In Bedfordshire 61% of County Wildlife Sites are classed as being positively managed for wildlife, a number that has gone up annually since we started monitoring this in 2009, another positive for our wildlife!

CSS will have two main themes. Firstly the conservation of the most important designated sites (such as SSSIs) and second, targeted improvements in the wider countryside, including more landscape scale conservation and continuing focus on improving water quality. Natural England has developed a National Targeting Framework and applicants will be scored based on how they will achieve the environmental priorities that are important in their wider area. Stronger targeting of benefits would mean an end to the current universally available Entry Level Scheme, though limited small capital grants through the HBCG and advice could still be made available for wider rural environment purposes.





Coronation Meadows

At the end of 2012, HRH The Prince of Wales suggested a remarkable nationwide project – a meadow in every county across the UK to mark the anniversary of The Queen’s Coronation. We are delighted that after a number of years of careful husbandry by BCN Wildlife Trust, Fancott Meadows SSSI, has been recognised as the Bedfordshire Coronation Meadow.

This meadow is teeming with wildlife, the grassland is home to an extraordinary range of flowers, starting with cowslips and adder’s tongue fern in the spring, followed by ragged-robin, great burnet and the now scarce saw-wort in the summer.

The first aim of the project was to identify one flagship meadow in each county, the second aim was to use these Coronation Meadows as source or donor meadows to provide seed for the creation of new meadows at recipient sites in the same county. In this way, new Coronation Meadows will be created, increasing the area of this valuable habitat, providing new homes for bees, butterflies and other pollinators and helping to secure our wild flower heritage for the next 60 years and beyond.

With regards to the uses of seed from the meadow the intention is that this will be used for reseeding new meadows but in a targeted way and one site has already been picked in Luton. The recipient sites need to be publically accessible and of similar environmental conditions, for example soils, to the donor meadow, otherwise, the chance of seed establishment is low. The seed collection and sowing work has not started yet, the plan is to start the work during summer 2015.

For more information visit

<http://coronationmeadows.org.uk/>



© Nancy Reed

Chiltern's Scrub Bash

On 22 October, 50 volunteers and staff from a range of conservation organisations descended onto Warden Hill at Galley and Warden Hills SSSI/CWS to carry out scrub related practical work. Huge areas of scrub were cleared, amounting to about 0.75 ha, to help restore areas of chalk grassland.

This task occurs annually and moves around sites within the Chiltern AONB. The events are organised by the Chiltern Conservation Board and the site owner/manager, which in the case of Galley and Warden Hills is Luton Borough Council with the help of the Wildlife Trust. Lunch is provided on the day and with help from the Wildlife Trust Grazing Officer, this year staff and volunteers enjoyed a lamb roast.

If your CWS is within the Chiltern AONB and you think it would benefit from some practical habitat management work and you are able to accommodate up to 50 volunteers then please contact Laura Downton.



© Nancy Reed

Traditional Orchards are a priority habitat in

Bedfordshire and were added to the CWS criteria in 2010 so the best sites can be recognised as County Wildlife Sites. Two sites, Fairfield East Orchard and Fairfield West Orchard became the first Traditional Orchard County Wildlife Sites in 2010. Since then, no new Traditional Orchards CWS have been recognised.

Traditional Orchards are defined as a group of five or more mature, traditional, cultivated fruit or nut trees in close proximity. The habitat is defined more by its structure than its vegetation type, with open grown mature trees sat in herbaceous vegetation. Traditional orchards are dominated by older, less intensively managed 'standard' trees, with main branches above the reach of grazing animals and planted at relatively low densities

Low intensity management is a key feature of traditional orchards, veteran trees are pruned to extend their life and the surrounding grassland grazed or hay cut, with no chemical input or herbicidal strips. The mature trees develop dead and decaying features providing important habitat for insects and birds as well as supporting lichens and mosses. Old orchards are often also home to rare or scarce fruit tree species.

Away from the trees, the diversity of other habitats such as hedgerows, scrub, ponds and other wetland features attract a range of other wildlife such as reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.

The Bedfordshire CWS criteria can be found on the BRMC website;

www.bedscape.org.uk/BRMC/newsite/index.php?c=sites_cws

The Campaign for the Farmed Environment

has recognised that pollinators are very much in the news and seem to be at the forefront of several strands of farming and environmental policy development. Defra have developed a National Pollinator Strategy which sets out the UK Government's plan to make sure pollinators are valued and managed sustainably to secure stable population levels by 2040.

Finding food and sites for nesting and hibernation is a challenge that faces all pollinators. The majority of herbaceous flowering plants benefit from being insect pollinated and for some crops this is crucial, not only ensuring seed and fruit set, but also increasing yields. In return, the pollinators gain a valuable source of energy and nutrients

Farming provides many of these resources through existing features such as hedgerows, trees, woodland, flower rich margins, buffer strips and semi-natural grassland but it could do more. Encouraging pollinators can also improve crop productivity.

The UK has around 267 species of bee; one honeybee species, 24 bumblebee species and the rest are solitary bees. Pollen and nectar provide a complete diet for bees. Other insects, such as various flies and midges, beetles, wasps, bugs, butterflies and moths also visit flowers to feed on pollen and nectar.

To ensure their survival it is important to provide a wide variety of flowering plants and that flowers are available for as long as possible through the year. Indeed for some of these insects (e.g. hoverflies and parasitic wasps), eggs can only be produced if they obtain the nutrients provided by flowers.

A CFE leaflet promoting what can be done for pollinators on farmed land is available to farmers and can be found at www.cfeonline.org.uk/campaign-themes/pollinators/

Arable margin ©Laura Downton



BSBI Plant Atlas 2020

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) aims to publish an atlas showing the distribution of flowering plants in the UK, every 20 years or so. This work is important to identify changes in the flora which may be caused by a number of factors such as climate change. The next atlas is due to be published in 2020. In order to produce records for Bedfordshire to go into the atlas, a working group of keen amateur volunteers has been assembled. Under the direction of the BSBI recorder for the county, they aim to survey and record over the next few years.

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) often contain the richest assemblies of plants, and many of the rare flowers are found on them. It is hoped that all the CWS will be surveyed, but this will only be done with the land owner's permission. If you would like to find out more or would be happy for your CWS to be surveyed, please contact John Wakely on 01525 860085 or yetjw@btinternet.com



Common knapweed
©Adam Kwolek



**Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire**



Cut&Chew


- IS AN INITIATIVE OF -

Aims to provide a comprehensive resource open to landowners, managers and animal keepers advising on all aspects of managing, restoring and using permanent grasslands.

The Wildlife Trust has set up a new website that is completely free to use. Cut&Chew acts as a local match making service between available land and livestock; and hay for sale and animal owners in need of hay. It also provides information to help find the right people, services and products to manage land traditionally for livestock and for the benefit of wild animals, birds and plants, as well as guidance on grassland management and restoration techniques.

On the website you can:

- View or register hay for sale
- View or register hay requirements
- View or register any meadows available for hay production
- View or register land or livestock available for grazing
- View a contact directory on, for example, local contractors (fencing, machinery), shearers, training courses, consultants, feed suppliers.
- View information about pasture and meadow management, funding opportunities and much more...



To view please visit
www.cutandchew.org.uk
or contact Laura Downton
at the Wildlife Trust for
more information

Contacts

Laura Downton from the Wildlife Trust can:

- Conduct a wildlife survey of your site
- Provide advice on grants that may be available to you and apply for them on your behalf
- Provide 'whole farm' conservation advice
- Match landowners in need of grazing animals with local graziers or help landowners find someone to cut their meadow for hay.

Website: www.wildlifebcn.org/wildlife-sites-bedfordshire

www.cutandchew.org.uk

Tel: 01234 364213 or 07734 478449

Email: laura.downton@wildlifebcn.org

Address; The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane, Bedford, MK41 9DJ

Other Useful Contacts

Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre based in Bedford, has been set up to gather, store and share information on Bedfordshire and Luton's wild species, habitats and protected sites. Email: brmc@bedsbionet.org.uk; Website: www.bedsbionet.org.uk Tel: 01234 355435

We hope that you have found this newsletter useful and interesting. General comments and suggestions for future articles are very welcome. If you would prefer to receive future newsletters via email, then please contact **Laura Downton** at the above telephone number, email or address.



**Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire**

Registered Office: The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne, CB23 6DH

Registered in England 2534145. Registered charity No. 1000412