



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire
Peterborough

WildPlaces

**Newsletter for Owners and Managers of Wildlife Sites
in Bedfordshire**

**Protecting wildlife
close to home**

Welcome

to the third issue of Bedfordshire's Wildlife Sites Newsletter. This newsletter has been made possible by the employment of Bedfordshire's first Wildlife Sites Officer. Some of you may have already met Laura Downton whose role is to provide free information and conservation advice to owners and managers of wildlife sites.

Chris and Carole's meadow prior to hay cut



Linking hay meadows and equines

Species rich grasslands can produce ideal hay for equines (horses, ponies, donkeys and mules). This is because the dietary requirements of equines differ from other herbivores; they require high fibres and minerals and low proteins and sugars – in contrast to modern breeds of dairy or beef cattle. These species rich grasslands contain a variety of grasses

and herbs which cater very well for the specific dietary requirements of equines, both through direct grazing and as hay.

Size is of little importance. Small species rich grasslands as well as large ones can produce excellent meadow hay that is in demand by equine owners. This has been demonstrated in a species rich grassland County Wildlife Site (CWS) in Totternhoe. Chris and Carole thought that their grassland of 1.47 ha could produce ideal equine meadow hay and they wanted to



offer someone the opportunity of producing this. They asked for help from the Wildlife Trust, and we were able to find a local horse owner who needed hay for her horses over the winter. The meadow was cut in August 2009 and as predicted the hay produced from this meadow provided excellent fodder for her horses. Plans are already in place to produce hay again this year.

The Wildlife Trust would like to help other landowners/managers and animal owners in the same position, so please get in touch if you are:

- A landowner/manager of species rich grassland and you think it could produce some quality meadow hay.
- An animal owner in need of meadow hay.
- Already producing and selling meadow hay.

Please contact Laura Downton (contact details on back page) or visit the following website www.cutandchew.org.uk

CAMPAIGN FOR THE FARMED ENVIRONMENT



launched on 5 November 2009.

An industry-wide campaign led by the NFU and FWAG, aimed at recapturing environmental benefits provided by set-aside before its abolition over the past two years. Crucially, it has the support and direct participation of not only Natural England and the Environment Agency, but also conservation bodies including RSPB and The Wildlife Trust.

The campaign will focus on three key themes: resource (soil and water) protection, farmland birds and farmland wildlife. The voluntary campaign will be working largely with arable farmers – those who previously had set-aside – who are either in or outside of Environmental Stewardship (ES). We will be working closely with Natural England to help them meet the targets of increasing the number of farmers in ES agreements through encouraging agreement renewal and new take-up for those not in the scheme.

Another key aim is to encourage voluntary environmental measure adoption. 15 land management options have been identified which could provide the greatest benefits to the three key themes described above. These are similar management options to those found in ES but they are entirely voluntary, less prescriptive and more flexible. The 15 voluntary measures are

aimed at farmers who don't wish to participate in ES but wish to improve their farmland environment.

The campaign will be delivered by county liaison groups. The Bedfordshire liaison group is already formed with representatives from many of the organisations listed above. The group will organise and manage promotional activities and events (e.g. farm walks). Defra have made it clear that if CFE objectives are not met by June 2012 then legislation requiring mandatory 5% set aside on all farms may be enacted. The NFU sees this voluntary approach as being more intelligent than a blanket approach – it allows for the targeted application of environmental measures in the locations where they will have the most benefit. This campaign could also demonstrate how well such partnerships and voluntary schemes can work which may mean that future proposed legislation can be substituted for a similar approach.

Events

If you are interested in attending any future event or would like more information, please visit the following website www.cfeonline.org.uk or contact Elizabeth Ranelagh (Email: elizabeth.ranelagh@cfeonline.org.uk Tel: 01223 874580).

Woodfuel East

Burning wood for heat is a truly sustainable source of renewable energy. This is an exciting time for woodfuel in the East of England with a new regional initiative – Woodfuel East. Woodfuel East will help woodland owners, woodland managers, agents and consultants, contractors, boiler installers and woodfuel users.

Woodfuel East aims to use locally sourced wood from existing under-managed woodland to provide heat in small to medium sized boilers. Using this resource sensitively by thinning or coppicing will not only provide woodland owners with diversified income streams but also importantly reduce our carbon footprint and improve the woodland for future generations.

Woodfuel East will support the supply chain “from forest to fire” by:

- Raising awareness.
- Giving help and advice.

- Organising training.
- Providing strategic investment support.
- List of suppliers.
- Linking supply and demand.

To find out more information visit www.woodfueleast.org.uk/



Help for woodland owners

English Woodland Grant Scheme

For owners of woodland County Wildlife Sites (CWS), funding is available to help you with the stewardship of existing woodland from the planning and assessment stage through to improvement and management work. The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) is the Forestry Commission's suite of grants designed to develop the co-ordinated delivery of public benefits from England's woodlands.

Ancient Woodland Restoration Grant

For owners of Ancient Woodland up to 80% of standard costs can be paid towards the protection and restoration of ancient woodlands within targeted parts of the region. These include areas centred in North Bedfordshire, Marston Vale and the Greensand Ridge.

For further advice and assistance contact Claire Wardle, your Ancient Woodland Liaison Officer.

Cut&Chew **new website launched**

The Wildlife Trust has set up a new website that is completely free to use. 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 and funding opportunities.



- View information about pasture and meadow management, including grassland enhancement techniques and much more...

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.

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



Land Management Advisory Service

Natural England's new Land Management Advisory Service is designed to help farmers and other land managers, including managers of urban green space, to improve their land management for the benefit of wildlife, landscape, public access and other environmental purposes. The service is provided mainly through land management advice events such as farm walks, workshops, clinics and farm visits. The service currently covers the following areas:

- Cross Compliance.
- Environmental Stewardship (ES).
- Environmentally sustainable land management.

To find out more about these free events near you visit the website: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/landmanagementadvice/default.aspx

Contacts

Laura Downton at the Wildlife Trust can:

- Conduct a plant survey of your site for free
- Provide advice on grants that may be available to you
- Provide pasture and meadow management advice
- Match landowners in need of grazing animals with local graziers or help landowners find someone to cut their meadow for hay.

Website: www.cutandchew.org.uk Tel: 01234 362776 or 07734 478449

Email: laura.downton@wildlifebcnp.org

Claire Wardle at FWAG can provide:

Advice on woodland condition and management, help with woodland grant applications, provide a link to woodland services and information, liaise between experienced individuals and groups to help organise co-operative working within your wood. Tel: 01234 228191 or 07825 526802

Email: claire.wardle@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Sue Rowell and Matthew O'Brien at FWAG offers a range of services for farmers and landowners from scheme applications to habitat creation, management plans to species advice. Tel: 01234 228062

Email: matthew.obrien@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Email: sue.rowell@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

David Hooton, East of England Deer Liaison Officer for the Deer Initiative can provide information and advice on deer management.

Tel: 01942 890798 Email: eastern@thedeerinitiative.co.uk

Bedfordshire and Luton Biological Records 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.wildlifebcnp.org/bedsbionet/brmc/index.htm 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 or email or write to Laura Downton, The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9DJ

This project is supported under Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund by Natural England.



Photos credited to Laura Downton, Christa Perry and Richard Astle.

Registered Charity 1000412