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WildPlaces

Newsletter for Owners and Managers of Wildlife Sites

Protecting wildlife
close to home

Welcome

to the first issue of Bedfordshire's Wildlife Sites Newsletter. This newsletter aims to give a brief introduction to what owning a wildlife site means, news of brand new projects and the support available to you. This newsletter has been made possible by the employment of Bedfordshire's first Wildlife Sites Officer, who is funded by the East of England Development Agency. 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.

A Success Story



Carol Horton owns 20 acres or 8.1 ha of chalk grassland in South Bedfordshire. 15 acres, 6.1 ha, of this grassland were successfully recreated from arable land under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme which has now been succeeded by the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). Help and advice for the schemes were provided by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). 5 acres or 2 ha of this site is recognised as a County Wildlife Site (CWS) because of its wildlife interest. Some of the grassland became overgrown with bramble so Carol met with the Wildlife Trust and FWAG last year to discuss the best management for her land. The grassland has now been cut and the wildflowers are appearing. It is expected that the chalk grassland will continue to improve over the next few years and its wildlife interest will be maintained with the help of some Wildlife Trust sheep.

If you think that we could help you, like Carol, then please contact Laura Downton at the Wildlife Trust.



GrazeBeds

GrazeBeds is a grazing scheme set up predominantly in Bedfordshire and to a lesser extent in Cambridgeshire. The purpose of the scheme is to match landowners or managers of grasslands in need of grazing with potential graziers in the local area. GrazeBeds forms part of the Grazing Animal Project (GAP) which was set up in 1997 to aid the development of conservation grazing in the United Kingdom.

Aims of GrazeBeds:

- Match landowners or managers of grasslands in need of grazing with potential graziers.
- Provide free grazing management and livestock management advice.
- Provide an information directory on machinery contracting services, advice sources and support services (e.g. vets and other relevant issues).
- Advice on grazing for wildlife.

If you have undergrazed grasslands or animals available to graze sites please contact Laura Downton at the Wildlife Trust.

Horse Grazing

Owning a horse is becoming an increasingly popular recreational activity and more and more land is being used as horse paddocks. There are greater benefits to the health of horses and ponies if old wildflower rich pastures are grazed as opposed to fertilised rye grass pastures. Rye grass pastures are high in proteins and low in fibre and are too lush for horses and ponies, which can lead to obesity, joint problems in young stock and laminitis. Old wildflower rich pastures provide a natural 'herb-mix' rich in minerals, high in fibre and low in protein which is the best diet for horses and ponies.

The Wildlife Trust is interested in examples of horses grazing on old permanent pastures and the possible benefits to wildlife. If you own a horse and keep it on a wildflower-rich pasture or may know someone who does, then please contact Laura. We also provide management advice and information on grazing your land for the benefit of horses and wildlife.

Even if you do not have a wildflower-rich pasture, Laura would be happy to provide management advice and information.



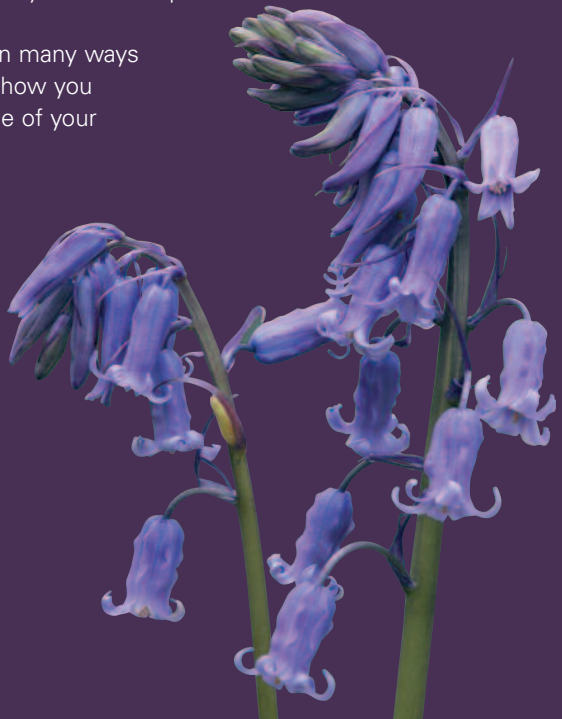
Help for woodland owners

Claire Wardle is one of the latest additions to the free services available in the Bedfordshire area. Claire is working in the area as the Ancient Woodlands Liaison Officer. This role is a new and developing post, so Claire wants to meet with as many woodland owners as possible to find out what you want from your woodlands and what will be the best way she can help.

The value of your woodlands can be seen in many ways and it is down to you as the land owner to how you want to use and protect the continued value of your woodland. For many woodlands years of management neglect, overuse by people and damage by deer and rabbits have reduced their value.

Claire can provide free advice about woodland condition, help with grant applications, write management plans and provide a link to other services and information. Claire can also put you in touch with other organisations that can help you tackle many woodland issues.

Please feel free to contact Claire at FWAG to arrange a visit or find out more about the services she can offer.



Banded demoiselle dragonfly

County Wildlife Sites (CWS)

Some wildlife sites are recognised as CWS because they represent the best areas for wildlife in Bedfordshire. These wildlife rich sites were once common in the countryside but many have been lost through increasing pressure from development and intensification of agriculture. This makes conservation of those remaining, very important.

If you are lucky enough to own or manage a CWS you can:

- Apply for grant aid to assist with management.
- Obtain free management advice from the Wildlife Trust.

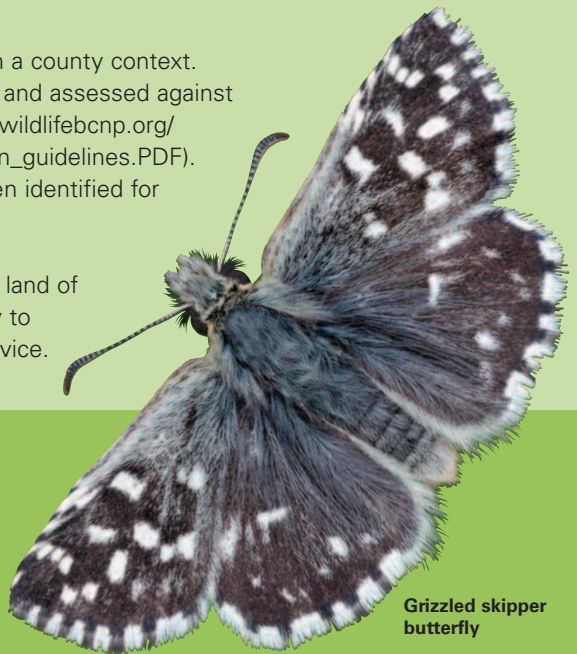
Owning a CWS:

- Places no additional restrictions on agricultural operations beyond the normal Environmental Impact Assessment regulations for uncultivated land.
- Landowners and managers still control all land management decisions.
- Other than local development plans, site details are not publicised and no rights of access are created.

Sites are identified as CWS by:

- Assessing their wildlife importance in a county context.
- Wildlife survey data is then gathered and assessed against carefully selected guidelines (http://www.wildlifebcnp.org/bedsbionet/brmc/docs/CWS_selection_guidelines.PDF).
- Those meeting the guidelines are then identified for CWS selection.

Even if you do not have a CWS but have land of wildlife interest then we would be happy to provide information and management advice.



Grizzled skipper butterfly

Environmental Stewardship

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme has now closed to all new applicants and was replaced by Environmental

Stewardship (ES) in 2005. ES is an agri-environmental scheme funded by Natural England. ES has three elements: Entry Level stewardship (ELS), Organic Level stewardship (OELS) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS). These stewardships provide payment to farmers to manage their farms, or parts of their farms, in a way that benefits wildlife. To find out more information, contact Becky Ward at FWAG or go to <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm>.

Services available

Laura Downton at the Wildlife Trust can provide:

- Support for owners and managers of wildlife sites.
- Advice on grassland and heathland condition and how to manage them with wildlife in mind.
- Help with finding a grazier for your grassland or land for your livestock.

Tel. 01234 364213 or 07734 478449. Email laura.downton@wildlifebcnp.org

Claire Wardle at FWAG can provide:

- Advice on woodland condition and how to manage woodlands.
- Provide a link to woodland services and information.
- Liaise between experienced individuals and groups to help organise co-operative working within your woods.

Tel: 01234 228191 or 07825 526802. Email claire.wardle@bedscc.gov.uk

Becky Ward and Matthew O'Brien at FWAG can provide:

- Advice and support for landowners and graziers on sources of funding.

Tel. 01234 228826 or 07823 530071. Email becky.ward@bedscc.gov.uk

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 alternatively write to:

The Wildlife Trust, Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9SH

