



The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

North Ceredigion Group

Newsletter

May 2017

1. Chairperson's Introduction

At the weekend we walked along the coast path from Morfa to the magical Penderi Cliffs reserve. The sun was shining over a calm sea and the cliff top grassland spangled with celandines, violets and wood sorrel and anemones. The air was charged with the coconut scent from swathes of gorse. We were repeatedly surveyed by glide-pasts of at least eight choughs with their engaging pee-ow calls. How lucky we are to live in such a beautiful and quiet part of the world! Penderi Cliffs has to be one of my favourite reserves with its dwarf sessile oak woodland sculpted to the cliff by the wind and carpeted with bluebells.

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed three excellent and informative talks, on restoration of ancient woodland (Adam Thorogood, Woodland Trust), bumblebees (Sinead Lynch, Bumblebee Conservation Trust) and moth trapping (Chris Shortall, Rothamsted Institute). The forthcoming meeting (8 May) is a chance to hear from members about some of their own sightings and interests, as well as including a brief AGM. Our indoor meetings will then cease until October but there is a full programme of outdoor walks and visits.



Red campion, bluebell and violets at Penderi.
(Photos Fiona Corke)

2. North Ceredigion Group programme of meetings for spring/summer 2017 (compiled by Ian Scott)

- **Monday 8 May 2017**, 7 pm – 9 pm. *Group AGM and Members Evening*. What is promised to be a brief AGM followed by slides and exhibits from members. Theatre C22, Hugh Owen Building, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth University.

Field meetings (* indicates this is a joint meeting with Aberystwyth Botanical Society):

- **Sunday 21 May 2017**, 10 am – 1 pm. *Plant Recording at Cwm Clettwr*, with introduction by County Recorder Steve Chambers. The aim is to create a plant species list for this WT reserve. Meet at Clettwr Café, Tre'r Ddôl, SY20 8PN. *

North Ceredigion Group – local contacts

Chairperson	Fiona Corke	01970 822078	fic5@aber.ac.uk
Secretary	Dave Purdon	01970 871012	dwp_taicanol@hotmail.com

- **Sunday 25 June 2017**, 10 am – 1 pm. *Visit to Cruglas Farm*, hosted by Terry and Jo Mills. Birds and habitat creation on this farm adjoining Cors Caron. Meet at Cruglas Farm, Swyddffynnon SY25 6AN (for directions see www.cruglasfarmcottages.co.uk).
- **Sunday 2 July 2017**, 10.30 am – 1 pm. *Wildlife of Aberystwyth Cemetery* with Roger Bray, Greener Aberystwyth Group. Visit to the town cemetery which is being managed for wildlife. Meet at the cemetery gates on Llanbadarn Road, Aberystwyth. *
- **Sunday 23 July 2017**, 10 am – 1 pm. *Grasses* with Sam Thomas. Venue Pen Dinas. Meet at top of Parc Dinas road, Cae Job estate, Penparcau (SN58873 79973). *
- **Sunday 13 August 2017**, 10 am – 1 pm. *Upland Flora* with Gill and Peter Foulkes. Meet along the road west of Nant-y-moch reservoir where the track goes off to Carn Owen (SN736885). *
- **Friday 25 August 2017**, *Bat Walk*, with Ceredigion Bat Group (Pen Dinas or Parc y Llyn). For details contact Chloe Griffiths (chloe.griffiths.ecology@gmail.com).
- **Sunday 17 September 2017**, 10 am – 1 pm. *Cors Ian WT Reserve* with Em Foot. Explore the reserve to see the recent improvements. Meet at the reserve (SN669696).*
- **October** (date to be confirmed), 10 am. *Ynyslas Dunes Fungi Walk* with Penny David and Gary Eason. *

3. The Nature of Our Village project (Penparcau Community Forum): update by Chloe Griffiths

Spring saw the Penparcau wildlife group begin their brand new Bee Walk. Full of optimism that the sun would shine on our efforts to record bumblebees on Pen Dinas, we were only slightly discouraged by being hailed on during our first Walk. In spite of this minor setback, we were delighted to spot a couple of queen buff-tailed bumblebees on the wing. There will be a programme of Bumble-related activities in Penparcau this summer, from family-friendly planting days to identification sessions, run by Sinead Lynch from Bumblebee Conservation. Watch this space for more details.



*... a fine, fat toad on Pen Dinas.
(Photo Chloe Griffiths)*

Reptile and amphibian surveys have also begun and we are delighted to be able to report a good showing of lizards and slow-worms on Pen Dinas, also palmate newts and a fine, fat toad. The situation on Parc y Llyn is more worrying though, as a recent pond survey showed that one of the two very small ponds at this site has dried out completely and must have a damaged liner. Frogs had laid spawn but without water their efforts were doomed to failure. We hope that the Council will act on this soon.

We produced our first annual report covering the work of 2016, called *How's our Wildlife Doing?*. This is aimed at a general audience and we spent some time sharing our results with local and

national organisations, including our AM, Simon Thomas and our MP, Mark Williams. Both were very encouraging and will commend the project in a 90 Second Statement in the Welsh Assembly and an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons, respectively. For a copy of the full report, go to <https://goo.gl/1vAHS3>.

Our report aimed to show how wildlife is faring in our village and, where possible, to compare this with how it is doing nationally. During 2016 we carried out 68 surveys, 369 people took part and made 648 wildlife recordings! We had some amazing records from local people, including choughs and ravens, 17 species of butterflies, a feathered gothic moth, a species not seen since 1937, and even otters and water vole. We were pleased to find that Penparcau is still home to hedgehogs and we even have a rare slug!

We will continue our work in 2017, aiming to fill as many of the gaps as possible in the picture of how our wildlife is doing. There is a massive amount of work to do and as the threats to nature continue to pile up it is more and more vital to learn about and protect what we have. The project is funded by the Nineveh Charitable Trust. If you would like to take part, please get in touch via chloe.griffiths.ecology@gmail.com or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/829779180427287/>.

4. Progress with renovation of the stable block at Cors Ian (Steve Cuttle)

As reported in this and previous newsletters, work has been ongoing to renovate the old stable block at the entrance to the Cors Ian reserve. Most of the work has been carried out by Em Foot and her volunteers but contractors were employed to remove the original asbestos roof, clear away the dilapidated caravan and other junk and, more recently, to fit a new metal roof and resurface the parking area.



The stable block at Cors Ian after removal of the two end sections, repair of the walls and fitting of a new roof. (Photo Steve Cuttle)

Left to its own devices, the old timber stable was rapidly heading towards becoming a dangerously unstable, decomposing wood pile. Though this would undoubtedly be

attractive to some creatures, the recent work has been directed at making the structure safe and providing a more varied range of habitats and possible nest sites. Most of the repair work has used timber salvaged from the dismantling of the compartments at either end of the stable. This leaves three remaining sections, each of which will have a different use.

The remaining left-hand unit (as viewed from the front) will contain a log pile and other materials to attract rodents. The window has been left open to allow access for nesting swallows and other birds. In contrast, the window and door of the right-hand section have been closed up and a nest box constructed inside in the hope that it will attract barn owls - avian access is via an opening in the end wall. If visiting the reserve, please do not try opening the door and risk disturbing any owls that might have chosen to take up residence. The central section has no windows and is to be adapted to provide roosting spaces for bats. The temperature inside this section will be monitored over the summer before deciding on how best to partition the interior to provide optimum, bat-friendly conditions.

Most of the stable block is constructed with double thickness walls with a cavity between the inner and outer layers. Existing holes in the outer wall have been retained and further openings have been created to provide access for birds to nest in the space within the wall. Tree creepers and great tits have nested here in the past and a blue tit and great tit appear to be already in residence this spring.

Although the improvements are not yet complete, work on the stables themselves has been put on hold to avoid disturbance during the breeding season but there will be further volunteer days during the summer and autumn to continue tidying the area immediately around the stable block.



*Nest box constructed for owls in the right-hand section of the stable block.
(Photo Em Foot)*

5. Bird notes – April 2017 (Mike Hayward)

The return of birds such as the chiffchaff in late February/early March is looked forward to with eager anticipation as it heralds the start of the influx of migrant birds for the forthcoming breeding season. The last two months have seen a steady increase in the number and variety of 'summer visitors' as the season has progressed into the later weeks of April. The range of species has included the regulars such as wheatears, blackcaps, wagtails, martins and swallow. In addition it is noteworthy that we are now getting regular sightings of Cetti's warblers in the north of the county, particularly around Cors Fochno. This was a species which, in the past, was very much confined to the Teifi Marshes reserve in the south of the county and this is perhaps a sign of the movement northwards of species as an effect of 'climate change'. Along the coast there has also been a steady

movement of waders, auks and, more recently, gannets and shearwaters on their northern passage to their breeding grounds.

In anticipation of the forthcoming breeding season nest boxes on the reserves have been checked and cleaned out and repaired as necessary. In addition, at Cwm Clettwr and Cors Ian a new design of tree creeper box is being trialled. In checking some of the kestrel boxes, which over the winter had been occupied by grey squirrels, it was found that tawny owls had taken up residence. It will be of interest to see whether they make use of these boxes for breeding.

For members who are interested in birds and wish to find new and rewarding locations for bird watching it is well worth joining the monthly *Bird Walks*. Full details can be found on the Ceredigion Bird Blog at <http://ceredigionbirds33.blogspot.co.uk/>

6. Wildlife Travel

In March members of the Committee attended a Forum meeting where representatives of the Local Groups get together and have the opportunity to discuss issues with staff from WTSWW headquarters. One of the items on the agenda was a presentation from Wildlife Travel, a company that organises natural history tours in the UK, Europe and beyond. What is most relevant, apart from their wide range of very interesting and very tempting tours, is the strong conservation ethos of the company and that the profits are donated to the Wildlife Trusts. If you are planning a wildlife holiday it might be worth looking to see what Wildlife Travel has to offer: see www.wildlife-travel.co.uk. Other wildlife tour operators are available!

7. Emily Foot's May 2017 update on work in the Ceredigion reserves



Treepopper in use, removing saplings from a local reserve. (Photo Em Foot)

Since January we have continued with our scrub and bramble clearance on many of our grassland reserves - **Rhos Glandenys, Rhos Pil Bach, Coed Maidie B Goddard and Rhos Glyn yr Helyg.**

The high winds took their toll on several more trees so we've had to clear fallen trees at **Cors Ian, Coed Penganowen and Cwm Clettwr.** We've also cleared willow and birch scrub from the bog, cleared gorse and bramble from the hillside path, mended a fence and cleared western hemlock and Douglas fir brash from the woodland floor at these reserves.

Volunteer work parties are on Wednesdays and Thursdays. For more details, please contact Em on e.foot@welshwildlife.org or 07980 932 332.

Please bring suitable clothing, footwear & waterproofs that you do not mind getting dirty, work gloves if you have them and your lunch. Many of our reserves are very muddy and will require wellies. Hot drinks and biscuits will be provided for elevenses.

Volunteers should always contact Em before the workdays to confirm details as changes often occur and with bad weather things may have to be cancelled or changed at the last minute.

We had a joint work party with Butterfly Conservation at **Coed Maidie B Goddard** to remove large patches of bramble from the middle of the meadow in the hope it will improve it for butterflies.

We've had some new tools arrive in the last few months - these *Treepoppers* lever out small trees and saplings complete with their roots and should prevent their regrowth. We've put them to good use at several sites including **Rhos Pil Bach, Caeau Llety Cybi** and **Rhos Marion** and we'll be using them at many more in the future.

We had a day working around the stables at **Cors Ian** - we made a nest box for owls, provided shelves for swallows to nest on, cleared the drainage ditch, cut down some saplings and overhanging branches and had a general clear up (see separate article).

Ten more dormouse boxes have been put up at **Cwm Clettwr** (thanks to Mike Hayward and team). They have been put in areas where we don't already have boxes to see if the dormice use these areas of the reserve.

8. Dolphin watches at Aberystwyth – volunteers required

As well as their main activities at New Quay, the Cardigan Bay Marine Wildlife Centre is also very interested in dolphin sightings elsewhere around the bay, including organising regular 2-hour observation sessions from the war memorial near the castle at Aberystwyth. These involve recording any cetaceans (and seals) seen and their position and behaviour, also movements of boats in the vicinity and any interactions with the animals. There is a standard reporting protocol and no specialised knowledge is required. Dolphins do not appear during all observation periods but this makes it more exciting when they do turn up. If you are interested in taking part, please contact Sarah Perry at s.perry@welshwildlife.org for more details.

Newsletter editor

Steve Cuttle (sputcuttle@btinternet.com), who gratefully acknowledges the contributions to this issue and invites contributions for the next newsletter.

Don't forget the AGM and Members Evening on 8 May
