



## *Llythyr Newyddion Gorffennhaf 2009/July Newsletter 2009*

### **Carmarthenshire Commons Project**

Common land represents an extremely useful resource in terms of wildlife and biodiversity value. Restrictive laws which prevent unsuitable development afford common land a degree of protection which is rarely seen in other forms of land use. It is not surprising therefore more than three-quarters of the national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty in England and Wales also contain areas of common land.

In cases where owners of common land can not be traced the local registration authority has power prevent unlawful activity (e.g. building, fencing, etc.). However current legislation places no duty on a local authority to positively manage the land and as a result many ownerless commons in Carmarthenshire have suffered due to lack proper management. The Carmarthenshire commons project aims to change all that!

The authority is currently undertaking a review of all ownerless commons in Carmarthenshire, the aim of the project is to identify those commons which would most benefit form positive management and then work to ensure suitable management actually takes place.

The starting point for the project is Mynydd Crugmelyn common which is one of only a handful of raised peat bogs in Carmarthenshire. Although the vegetation structure has been greatly affected by burning and most of the mire surface is currently very dry, happily there are some good patches of bog vegetation which should spread with the correct management. The authority is currently hoping to raise the water level by blocking the main outfall ditch and then subsequently assess the need for further damming work. Also it is hoped to negotiate a suitable summer grazing programme on the site.

The programme is still very much in its infancy, however we shall keep you updated on any future developments so watch this space!!





## Llanelli's Allotment Project

With the rise in media coverage, the increased cost of fresh food, the desire to know what is in the food we eat and the drive towards taking health activity, the interest in allotment gardening has been steadily increasing, while the provision has remained static or declined.



A look at the national averages shows that the number of allotment plots available in Llanelli is well below what it should be, and the waiting lists held by allotment providers bares out this point. Llanelli's Green Network Partnership, facilitated by Foothold Regeneration, has therefore decided to look at providing more allotment plots in Llanelli.

A strategic group has been drawn together, including the authorities that will manage and maintain the new sites. Four sites have been identified, including three smaller community-based sites and one major strategic site, all on land which has little or no environmental value, being rough grass that is regularly fly tipped and unmaintained. Funding has been secured to commission some site investigation work to check the sites for suitability as Llanelli has a huge industrial past and we need to be sure that the land is not contaminated or providing habitat specialist habitat for endangered species and this work is due to start shortly.

The Green Network will make grant applications to secure the capital funding, to create state of art allotment spaces, with water supplies, sheds and paths, and security fencing which the partnership are hoping to have some available for the 2010 growing season.

Allotments are a haven for wildlife, the cultivated and empty plots, nectar-producing plants, compost heaps, grass areas, sheds and stores, and the boundary hedges and banks all provide a variety of habitats, attracting birds, insects and small mammals. They are places in which individuals can have a real impact in helping biodiversity.

In particular many insects, spiders and invertebrates thrive in areas of 'weedy' vegetation such as vacant plots, and because this type of habitat has been virtually eliminated from farmland these corners of urban areas can have an unexpectedly high wildlife value. Any area of allotments should not seek to be too tidy!

By managing allotments in an environmentally friendly manner you can help provide a good environment for many types of beneficial creatures, which assist the gardener in a number of ways:

- Insects pollinate the flowers of fruit and vegetable plants in their search for nectar.
- Birds, insects and other creatures devour garden pests such as aphids, mealy bugs and whiteflies.
- Earthworms help maintain the soil's quality.

The Green Network is receiving more enquiries from communities that want to create allotment space for their communities and the Green Network Project Manager will continue to work with these groups to help them achieve their objectives. For further information please contact Richard Davie at Foothold Regeneration on 01554 779910.





## CCW grant fund more biodiversity projects in the county

The LBAP partnership's annual grant fund from the Countryside Council for Wales has been agreed for 2009–10. As well continuing support for annual projects grant funding has been given to new projects to help biodiversity action plan species and habitats. In summary these are:

- **Carmarthenshire Tree Sparrow Group** help with funding for feed for these birds. It is now thought that the Twyi valley has 70–80% of the Welsh population and the availability of feed is one of the limiting factors to their survival. Local volunteers also help with feed for these birds and this grant is to help with this vital assistance for the birds.
- A Carmarthenshire **Fungi Group** based at NBGW will be set up to help record the fungi in the county and train volunteers who might be interested in finding out more about the identification of fungi and their importance in maintaining healthy ecosystems.
- A **dormice** project led by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales based around their reserve at Rhos Cefn Bryn – the area around this reserve is a key area for dormice in the county and improving the hedgerow connections between key areas of woodland habitat will help this rare mammal maintain and increase its range.
- Electric fencing will be bought to protect nests and chicks of **Little Ringed Plovers**, which nest along the river Tywi. This river SSSI is one of the most important sites in Europe for this bird that nests on the shingle banks along the river. Cattle are a real issue as they go onto the shoals and crush the nests. Electric fencing around the nests could help them successfully raise their brood.
- **Hedgehog** postcards will be produced to try and get records for this well-known but declining mammal. This will tie in with a national survey next year by the Mammals Society.
- A **leaflet** will be produced on the revised LBAP and two **pop-up panels** on amazing biodiversity facts about Carmarthenshire and why biodiversity is important to us in all aspects of our lives.
- Grant funding will be used for continued habitat management at our **Morfa Berwig water vole project** site.
- **Heathland day at Llyn Llech Owain CP** – working with rangers at the country park we will have a day promoting heathland habitat and species and how it is being restored there restoration. We will also work with an environmental education specialist and some young people on a workshop for them on themes around this habitat.
- We will also continue our annual funding of the **brown hairstreak butterfly** survey and habitat management in the county with Butterfly Conservation and the annual **Sixth Form Biodiversity seminar** in partnership with WWT.



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## LBAP Species/Habitat No. 6 Reedbeds

Reedbeds are an important habitat that play an important function in purifying our water and helping with flood protection. These wetlands are dominated by common reed, often growing alongside a range of other wetland plants. Reedbeds often occur in association with other wetland habitats such as open water, ditches, carr (wet) woodland and wet grassland.

Reedbeds provide an important habitat for birds, including a number of nationally rare species. Characteristic breeding species in Carmarthenshire include reed warbler, sedge warbler, reed bunting, water rail and Cetti's warbler. Reedbeds also provide important roosting and feeding sites for migratory and wintering birds such as the rare bittern, which is recorded at the National Wetlands Centre, Llanelli. A range of invertebrates adapted to wetland habitats can be found, such as the various dowdy wainscot moths or the colourful scarlet tiger moth.

Over the centuries many reedbeds have been lost through drainage and agricultural intensification. More recently other examples have been lost or degraded through development and pollution. Many sites have also suffered from a lack of or inappropriate management, leading to scrub encroachment and succession to woodland.

Reedbed and wetland habitat creation and enhancement has taken place within the Llanelli Millennium Coastal Park, and at the National Wetlands Centre at Penclacwydd. The importance and vulnerability of reedbeds and other wetland habitats is a focus of their work and the site is now used by thousands on wintering wildfowl and waders.

Locally important reedbed sites occur around the Witchett Pool at Laugharne–Pendine Burrows, at Ffrwd Fen near Pinged and at Llangennech overlooking the Loughor estuary. A number of smaller (but collectively significant) examples also occur along the Llanelli coast, from Kidwelly to Bynea. In Carmarthenshire, eight SSSI include at least some reedbed habitat.

Reed beds are becoming increasingly popular for the treatment of both industrial and domestic effluents, offering a simple, economical means of wastewater treatment. They can be created so as to fit in with the landscape and be an opportunity to create valuable habitats for wildlife. By soaking up and collecting water they are also an effective flood-defence system.



Reedbeds at Ffrwd Fen.  
© Lizzie Wilberforce



## The Big Pond Dip 2009

This project has been organised by Pond Conservation and is a great opportunity to help out with an important survey. If you want to know if your school or garden pond is in good shape for wildlife do the Big Pond Dip to find out! The survey is quick and easy to do and you can enter the results online.



Taking care around the pond and never carrying out the survey by yourself. All you need is an ordinary kitchen sieve and a white tray. Download the Big Pond Dip form from the website: [www.pondconservation.or.uk/bigponddip](http://www.pondconservation.or.uk/bigponddip) and take it with you to the pond to remind you what to record. Now get dipping – check the animals you've got and record some simple information about your pond. Make sure you wash your hands after the dip and enter your results on the website.