

June 2008

Biodiversity News in Carmarthenshire

If you have any questions or would like to find out more about any of the items in this newsletter, then please contact Isabel Macho, Biodiversity Officer on 01267 224653 or IMacho@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Rare albino tadpoles signal an unusual discovery – from BBC Website

Albino tadpoles have been discovered in a garden in Carmarthenshire. The finding is highly unusual because at least four separate blobs of albino spawn were found deposited in the pond, signalling what could be a significant population of frogs carrying the rare recessive gene for albinism.

Though no adult albino frogs were seen, their frogspawn and tadpoles are reportedly doing very well. The tadpoles have the characteristic pink eyes and off-white skin colouration.

Albino individuals of adult frogs, toads and newts have been reported in the past, though sightings are considered very rare. Cases of multiple albinistic individuals in a breeding population are even rarer.

The sighting was reported to Froglife's Wildlife Information Service – a public advice service encouraging people to get involved with amphibian and reptile conservation.

Froglife report the batches of white tadpoles suggest that a number of adults that carry genes for albinism possibly exist in the area, not just one. Usually though albino amphibians fail to live to a breeding age – their white colouration makes them very conspicuous to the various animals that depend on frogs for food.

Visit Froglife's website at: www.froglife.org.uk



© Steve Diamond

Taken at the National Botanic Gardens this photo shows one of our natural garden pest controllers doing its job by eating the aphids damaging this plant.

With thanks to **BBC Wildlife Magazine** from which some of this information has been taken.
Visit their website for more wildlife news: www.bbcwildlifemagazine.com

June 2008

Biodiversity News in Carmarthenshire

Forest School - using woodlands for learning and play – Rosie Carmichael

Forest Schools have been working in Carmarthenshire during the last five years, enabling children to play and learn in a woodland setting. The woodland creates a very special learning environment and one which many people respond to very positively.

One of the main aims of Forest School is to develop self confidence and self esteem and this is achieved through games, arts activities, story telling, and the learning of woodland skills. Children usually spend a morning or a day at Forest School, ideally every week or fortnight and it becomes a regular part of their learning – it is not a one-off event. All Forest School leaders carry out specific training and teacher/pupil ratios at sessions are higher than in school, partly because of the nature of the activities offered – children may be learning to use small tools.

As well as their commitment to working with children, Forest School leaders want to ensure that their use of each Forest School site is sustainable. To achieve this Environment Wales and the Carmarthenshire LBAP partnership jointly funded training for Forest School leaders to help them look at the impact of Forest School activities on sites, and to raise awareness of woodland biodiversity, as well as of the historic environment.

Over the last year this one-day course has been run at five venues across Wales, including Marros Wood in Carmarthenshire and over 45 people have attended the training. During the day trainees look at the history of the site and its features - its habitats and species, its archaeology, and at the impact that different activities may have on these. We discuss how to reduce these impacts and we also look at techniques for monitoring changes within sites – fixed-point photography, quadrats and transects. Feedback has been very positive and over the next 12 months Forest School will be running further training to assist in the development of simple site management plans. These plans will set out the woodland and biodiversity management that each site requires.

Insect activities in June!



Learn more about Britain's insects by taking part in National Insect Week from 23 to 29 June. For more details see

www.nationalinsectweek.co.uk



Butterfly Conservation has launched a national Garden Moths Count survey – make the most of the longer evenings at this time of year to see if you can see identify on of 20 key species in your garden. This survey is taking place from 21 June to 6 July. Find out how to take part by visiting

www.mothscount.org



As part of the Garden Moths Count, Butterfly Conservation is also running a nationwide survey of hummingbird hawkmoths and painted lady butterflies. To take part visit www.butterfly-conservation.org.uk

You can also get involved in National Moth Night, which takes place on 7th June:
www.nationalmothnight.info

nationalmothnight 7th June 2008

June 2008

Biodiversity News in Carmarthenshire

Old-age buttercups to offer clues – from BBC website

Scientists in Wales have launched a search for old buttercups which they claim could help reveal the age of our meadows. Buttercups are thought to be able to survive for centuries and a spread of them could date a meadow, in the same way that rings denote the age of a tree.

Aberystwyth's Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (Ibers) is asking the public for help. It wants details of creeping buttercups and the number of their petals.

There are three different species of buttercups, but researchers only want details about the creeping buttercup species. This species reproduces "vegetatively", and as a result lives for a long time.

How can you help?

- ✿ Find a field containing lots of flowering buttercups
- ✿ Try to age the field by asking the farmer or landowner or looking at old maps.
- ✿ Make sure you can identify the creeping buttercup – their leaves are in three parts with a short stalk connecting the middle section.
- ✿ Look at 100 creeping buttercup flowers and count the number with more than five petals.

Preliminary research has shown that old buttercups from older pastures are more likely to have extra petals than young buttercup in newly established fields. Looking at the proportion of buttercups in a field with more than five petals may indicate the age of the field – i.e. indicate when it was last ploughed.

People who would like to help are asked to send the estimated age of the field, number of flowers with additional petals, the location and date to Dr John Warren at jhw@aber.ac.uk



June 2008

Biodiversity News in Carmarthenshire

Carmarthenshire Energy Agency – promoting local sustainable communities

The Carmarthenshire Energy Agency is tackling climate change head-on by developing clean-energy projects, which can also boost community and economic development. The Carmarthenshire Energy Agency is working hard to engage with communities and promote sustainable development and have a number of excellent projects underway.



Community Solar Energy Project

Twenty-nine community halls, urban and rural have had solar panels installed to provide free hot water to lower the halls' carbon emissions. Each hall is also receiving a specially designed 1-m-tall plaque to commemorate the installation of the solar panels.

Community Zero Carbon Project

A further 30 community buildings, large and small in urban and rural Carmarthenshire have been identified to participate in a zero-carbon project. They will be used to raise awareness of climate change by showcasing clean energy technologies in Carmarthenshire and boost local community regeneration.

Biomass Energy Co-operative

The Agency has established an energy co-operative with an annual target of supplying 15,000 tonnes of biomass woodchip from local, sustainable sources for local markets in south West Wales.

Hydrogen Farm (Wales Ireland Rural Hydrogen Energy Partnership)

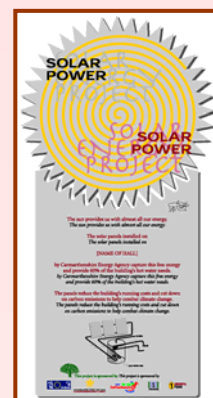
The Agency is developing a highly innovative Hydrogen Farm to significantly lower agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, generate clean energy with fuel cells and boost rural economic development.

Community buildings can act as public showcases in promoting the sustainable energy technologies which are required to combat climate change. Our natural environment is also a vital component when considering sustainable development and meeting the challenge of combating climate change - are there areas within community parks and picnic areas where the benefits of more sustainable management can be demonstrated in the same way as these excellent projects?

Guto Owen is Manager of Carmarthenshire Energy Agency and can be contacted on 01267 237314 or guto@yannisirgar.org



Neuadd Bro Fana,
Ffarmers



June 2008

Biodiversity News in Carmarthenshire

Plastic bags, butts and bottles awash on Welsh beaches! - from Marine Conservation Society website

Plastic on Welsh beaches accounts for at least 73% of the total amount of litter found on UK beaches, according to the recently published Marine Conservation Society's (MCS) Beachwatch 2007 survey report. The national average of all plastic litter found on UK beaches is 58%, however the percentage of plastic debris in Wales is over 73%! In addition, the report shows that plastic litter on UK beaches has increased by a staggering 126% since the annual survey began in 1994.

Plastic accounted for 16 of the top 20 items found on Welsh beaches, with plastic bags, plastic drinks bottles and plastic-based cigarette butts amongst the top 20 items frequently encountered. Sadly, when compared to the UK average, Welsh beaches suffered the highest density of recreational and beach visitors' litter, the highest density of fishing and shipping litter of any UK country.

A total of 41,030 litter items were collected on 38 Welsh beaches over a total length of 15.45 km. It seems that Welsh beaches are suffering from a tide of plastic litter, which may never biodegrade and which appears to be increasing. Plastics are of particular concern as they could persist in the marine environment for centuries, with fatal consequences for marine wildlife.

In Carmarthenshire two beaches, at Cefn Sidan and Llanelli have been adopted under the MSC 'Adopt a Beach' scheme where a stretch of coast has been adopted and local people take part in annual or quarterly beach cleans and surveys to monitor litter throughout the year.

The full MCS Beachwatch 2007 results can be downloaded at www.adoptabeach.org.uk.

There are also 14 Coastcare groups in Carmarthenshire that have adopted beaches, undertaking practical clean-ups along the coast and to raise awareness of the issues of coastal littering. This is undertaken under the auspices of the Clean Coasts project, run by Keep Wales Tidy. The Project is also involved with schools and colleges where awareness raising activities take place and one-off clean ups arranged. For more information contact local officer Phil Davies at philip.davies@keepwalestidy.org



June 2008

Biodiversity News in Carmarthenshire

Events Programme

Friday 6th June, 16.00. The transformation of North Dock, Llanelli. Meet in Discovery Centre by North Dock. SS 497 995. For further information and to book onto the walk please phone 01554 772 368. Please dress appropriately for the weather. Children must be supervised by a parent or guardian at all times.

Friday 13th June, Betws Park, Ammanford. A Wales Biodiversity Week event. Find out more about the bats and moths in this town park. Meet at 21:15 at the park entrance. Contact Isabel Macho, 01267 224653 for more details.

Wednesday June 18th. 19:00-21:00 at Keepers, Brechfa. A look around the carpark and beside the forest road learning how to use a botanical key and putting new knowledge into practice by identifying wild flowers growing in the area.

Sunday June 22nd. Meet at 14:00 at Keepers, Brechfa. A walk to look at the flowers growing in a variety of habitats at a nearby farm including wetland, woodlands and hay meadows to develop botanical identification skills and to look at the relationship between plants and where they grow.

For more information, contact Pobl y Fforest on 01267 202221; email: pyffgwernogle@aol.com