

From the chief executive

The world seems gripped with financial fear. We've had state bail-outs of banks, plunging share values, and an economic recession is beginning to bite.

This uncertainty poses us questions. What is of real worth these days? Well, surely our wealth of wildlife is truly precious, in a way which is unaffected by a run on the banks or a stock market crash.

Is Gwent Wildlife Trust a luxury in these times? I certainly hope not, and I think we have pretty good justification in saying so.

Nature, in all its different forms, has real and inalienable value. The Wildlife Trust's work is partly about this wildlife. It is also about people's enjoyment and appreciation of our rich natural environment, which comes free – always a good selling point when money is tight!

Our reserves provide for wonderful recreation, as does the wider countryside and urban greenspace about which we also enthuse. Use of these resources supports better physical and mental health, and stimulates learning – giving us priceless commodities. Furthermore, wildlife is the fabric of our landscape. This gives us a sense of place and community pride, and does much to drive our social and economic well-being. Surely we want an economic

renaissance founded on real value to take us out of this current down-turn?

I believe our work remains vitally important in this more difficult economic climate. I am deeply concerned about the impact of recession and a public spending squeeze on GWT. I know that as things get tough, some people may have to give up membership of the Trust, for the time-being at least. But without the support of our members, we can't exist.

Thank you for all you are doing for local wildlife as a GWT member. I fervently hope you can carry on doing it! In times like these, we need even more help – through volunteering, finding new members, getting involved in fundraising for the Trust or pledging a legacy. This edition of *Local News* features some of the ways that you may be willing to help us.

Please do what you can. I hope you can stay with us through what looks likely to be a difficult time for individuals and organisations. We need to make sure it is not such a difficult time for wildlife – we must protect our natural heritage and beauty for itself, for ourselves, and for our children and the generations beyond.

Julian Branscombe, Chief Executive
jbranscombe@gwentwildlife.org

Support the Trust

Fundraising Ideas

We're always on the look out for new ways to raise our profile and fundraise on behalf of Gwent's wildlife and, as always, on the look out for volunteers to help us fulfil these goals. Maybe you're an ideas person – or perhaps you've had experience fundraising for other goals – PTFA, charities, sports clubs – in which case, let us know your ideas – it's always better not to keep trying to reinvent the wheel.

Or maybe you're looking for ways to help – would you be interested in running coffee mornings, helping with recruitment, or giving talks on our behalf (either about GWT – of course we'd help with this, or on your own specialist subject)? The possibilities are endless – we just need to know you're out there – contact Denis Jackson on 01600 740600 or djackson@gwentwildlife.org.

And of course, if you know of any charitable trusts or organisations who might be interested in supporting or sponsoring us financially, then do please get in touch. All contacts are valuable and who knows where they might lead...

Wanted

Members to sign up for relaunched lottery!

Wildlife Winners



'Dreaming of nuts'
Photo credit: Gemma Bodé

Your chance to win some cash AND help dormice in 2009

GWT is relaunching its 100 Club as **'Wildlife Winners'** – we are hoping that many more of our members will take part, to help save our dormice.

Wildlife Winners is a way to support the work of GWT, while at the same time, having a little flutter.

We will be issuing tickets, giving you a monthly £1 stake in the draw, paid by monthly standing order or an annual cheque of £12. The draw will take place once a month – and the one lucky winner will receive 30% of the total monthly income.

And of course, the big winner this year will be Gwent's dormice – who will receive 70% of the income each and every month in 2009. Jan Kinchington, our in-house dormouse expert, is hoping that the proceeds will support her habitat management work at Croes Robert and Wet Meadow Wood, and dormouse box monitoring work at a further three reserves. Gwent's dormice need you!

To find out more, please contact Rachael on 01600 740600 or rdaniels@gwentwildlife.org.

More members please!

Members are the lifeblood of Gwent Wildlife Trust. The 7000 members of GWT provide us with a superb mandate to stand up for wildlife across Gwent, a superb volunteer workforce, and vital funds that underpin the whole organisation. Quite simply without you, our members, there would be no Wildlife Trust.

We know that there are many people out there who might be interested in the Trust, but who don't know much about us. You will know some of them! Don't hesitate to mention GWT to your friends and family, and keep a membership form and Trust magazine or Annual Review to hand, to help spread the word.

For a stock of membership materials, please contact your GWT local group, or the GWT office on 01600 740600. We are organising a membership recruitment training day for volunteers and staff in March – please, please, please consider coming on that. To book, contact Denis Jackson by ringing the GWT office, or e-mailing djackson@gwentwildlife.org.

Gift membership

Christmas is almost upon us, but there is still time to give membership of GWT, or our junior wing – Wildlife Watch. Contact the Trust office to arrange this.

Wildlife Landlords 2009

Over winter, our wildlife will appreciate shelter. Come spring and summer, wildlife needs to raise families. Nest boxes do make a difference, by helping stop the decline of species. We have a number of volunteers who will be checking our stock of nest boxes for birds and dormice on many of our reserves. We plan to put up many more this coming year, including at Wysewood Common. We also need a lot more wildlife landlords to sponsor the boxes.

What could be a better 'Boxing Day' present for someone who loves wildlife? Make them the Landlord of a small nest box at a reserve nearby for as little as £15 – or of two boxes for £25. Boxes for large birds are a little dearer. As a Landlord, they will receive a 'Title Deed' to their nest box, ideal for framing, twice yearly reports on activity in their box and others, and entry into an annual draw for a special day's events.

Full details and an application form are on the website at www.gwentwildlife.org or ring the office on 01600 740600.

Where there's a WILL there's a way! – Roger Finn

This year has been a very special one for the Trust. The highlight was the successful acquisition of Wyeswood

Common, but other major successes should not be forgotten. The Trust's acclaimed programme of lifelong learning is attracting record numbers and inspiring people of all ages. Some of our campaigns for wildlife are having a national impact, while other aspects of our work such as the Gwent Living Churchyards Project are quietly but effectively saving our wildlife, enhancing Gwent and winning the Trust supporters.

The work of the Trust depends on you, our supporters, and you are very generous. But think how much more we could achieve with more resources. Therefore, we are asking all our members to consider leaving the Trust a gift in their wills, as this is one of the most valuable ways that you can help save our wildlife.

One of our members, Steph Tyler, recently explained why she and her husband have decided to leave a legacy to the Trust:

"The answer to why my husband and I are leaving a legacy to Gwent Wildlife Trust is simple. Since I was a small child in Lincolnshire, I have cared passionately about wildlife, whether it is a butterfly, bug, bird or plant. I have lived near Monmouth, in a beautiful part of the country, for more than thirty years and have been a member of the Trust since we moved here. I have been fortunate to work in conservation for much of my life, with the Gwent Wildlife Trust in the early 1980s and then with the RSPB. About 20 years ago, we were lucky enough to acquire six acres of steep, species-rich pasture next to our cottage at auction. This has given us enormous pleasure (and hard work over the years keeping bracken and brambles at bay and finding cattle and ponies to graze it) and we cannot bear the thought that the field with all its wonderful plants, insects, grass snakes and slow worms will not continue to be in sympathetic hands after our deaths. We also want people to enjoy the field and its wildlife once we have gone. Having discussed it with our two offspring, the choice was easy – leave it to a conservation organisation to manage in perpetuity. We hope also to leave a sum of money to help the management of our pasture.

The Wildlife Trust already owns land adjacent to ours, so the Trust was the obvious recipient. Extending the existing reserve can only help wildlife. The Trust's recent purchase of the dairy farm above our land, removed one of our biggest problems – enrichment from soil and fertilizer run-off – so we gladly donated to the appeal to buy the farm."

Thanks go to those who have generously remembered the Trust in their wills. Bequests left by Isabel Titie and Chris Renshaw helped the Trust to buy 33 acres of grassland at Magor Marsh in 2003.

This bequest has provided the nucleus of funding around which we could attract further grants and membership support where we are now encouraging the return of breeding lapwings. Last year, when we received a gift in the will of Brenda Elderkin, the timing was perfect to fund work we needed to do at a string of reserves around Risca, Pontypool and Cwm, including the Silent Valley LNR. Now, we've just received a bequest from Joan Cowburn to help the management and maintenance of Priory Wood, to benefit species like pied flycatcher, hawfinch and lesser-spotted woodpecker.



Legacy income is directly benefitting lapwing at Magor Marsh.
Photo credit: Ray Armstrong

An added incentive to leaving a will for wildlife is that gifts to charities are exempt from inheritance tax which maximises your charitable gift. If you would like to discuss leaving a gift in your will to the Trust, please contact Roger Finn at the Trust office on 01600 740600 or visit the Trust's website: www.gwentwildlife.org.

Book Sales

In an effort to keep abreast with these difficult economic times, we're hoping to make better use of all the gorgeous books and literature that we have to sell – they're a fantastic resource to generate income and promote Gwent's wildlife. While these items do make regular appearances at our events and open days, there's surely got to be potential for a larger market. If you're interested in helping out as a volunteer, here's a ready made project for you. We'd like someone to take the reins with book distribution and marketing – do you know of local retailers willing to sell our books? Or perhaps you're willing to sell them directly on our behalf at different outlets? This task would require some administration and marketing skills, but you wouldn't be tied to our office. If you are looking for a new challenge, then do please get in touch – ring Rachael on 01600 740600 or e-mail her at rdaniels@gwentwildlife.org.

E-Bay – Money for old roof tiles...

Keith Allen is still keen to receive your unwanted items for sale for the Trust via eBay. Over the last year he's sold a lampshade for £50, some old roof tiles that had been hanging around at Pentwyn for years for £70, an electric pump, destined for the skip, for £100, and when a book didn't sell he cut out the illustrations and sold those for £5. Keith can be contacted on 01600 860351 or kh.allen@virgin.net. How about those unwanted Christmas presents?

Gwent Ecology

Gwent Wildlife Trust now runs its own ecological consultancy – Gwent Ecology – specialising in work including:

- Protected species surveys
- Botanical surveys
- Management advice and management planning
- Monitoring habitat change

Gwent Ecology will work for any organisation or individual. For any enquiries, please contact Gemma Bodé on 01600 740600 or gbode@gwentwildlife.org.

Dormice & Charcoal

Save a dormouse – have a barbecue! That's what our leaflet says, because that's the truth. Jan Kinchington and her volunteers spend hundreds of days each year undertaking coppicing at Croes Robert and Wet Meadow Wood, to create ideal conditions for dormice – and indeed many other species of wildlife which benefit from the resulting thicket and glade woodland structure.

We cover some of the costs by making barbecue charcoal and artist's charcoal. However, we could make more money if you could help with sales and distribution of charcoal. In these times of difficult finances, we shall need to work hard to maintain or increase our income – you could help dormice just as much by helping with sales and marketing as you could on the reserve itself. To get involved with either, please ring Jan Kinchington on 07738 231155, e-mail her on jkinchington@gwentwildlife.org or leave a message for her at the Trust office.

Speak up for wildlife – Sorrel Jones

Here at Gwent Wildlife Trust, we've always been known as a voice for wildlife. We raise awareness of local biodiversity, respond to planning applications, talk with politicians and campaign on the issues that threaten wildlife.



CALM protest in front of the Welsh Assembly Senedd. Photo credit: Rebecca Price

One of our campaigns at the moment is the threat of the new M4 motorway. This could badly damage one of Wales' best wetland landscapes. Whilst there is a moral argument for saving wildlife for its own merit, the reason that most of us want to have wildlife around is purely for our own benefit – we enjoy seeing it. We want wildlife to be preserved so we can continue to watch it, walk past it, photograph it, and relax near it. Those of us who are slightly more altruistic want to preserve wildlife so that others can enjoy it too. At a less personal level, we need biodiversity to manage our water, purify our air and pollinate our crops.

But whilst Gwent Wildlife Trust is an effective voice for wildlife, I'm not so sure we work very well as a voice for people. I can argue for what wildlife needs because I'm backed up by scientific research. But how can I prove that people in Gwent enjoy wildlife, and want to conserve it? At the end of the day, you have to be your own voice.

The great thing is that there's never been a better time to speak up. Government is committing to 'citizen centred' delivery of services, and listening to what people tell them. When 250 people stood outside the Senedd last month, showing their opposition to the new M4, Assembly Members came outside to speak to us about our concerns.

I have to thank all the people who came to the protest. It was truly inspirational for me to know the breadth of our support, and see so many people, from across Wales, using their voice.

So what's stopping you? If you can write a letter, you can be heard. Write to your Assembly Member, and sign the No New M4! Petition, by visiting the CALM website at www.savethelevels.org.uk, or go straight to: www.gopetition.com/petitions/no-new-m4

Use your voice!

Reserves News – Lauri Maclean

Reserves Roundup

Work has started in earnest on the Wyeswood Common project with baseline surveys completed for soils, vegetation and current wildlife. We will now be able to monitor how the new reserve changes as we begin the slow process of turning Wyeswood into a wildlife rich landscape. The hedgerows at Wyeswood already provide valuable habitat for dormice and we have put up 50 new dormouse boxes to monitor the population. Checking of the boxes will begin in spring when the dormice come out of hibernation.

As well as big projects creating diverse habitats for a range of species, we also work on projects involving just one species. We are working with the Countryside Council for Wales to save the nationally rare meadow clary – a plant that produces striking violet-blue flower spikes familiar to many gardeners. This species is currently thought to survive in just 20 sites in Britain. The only site in Wales is a tiny pocket of limestone grassland near Rogiet, which the Trust may be asked to manage. The Trust manages similar grassland reserves nearby where we hope to establish meadow clary, to better protect the native Welsh population.

We can confirm that wild boar are now roaming Croes Robert after we found tracks leading to an impressive mud wallow! It is likely that the wild boar have come from the population established in the Forest of Dean.

Raising funds for reserves-based projects is going well this year. Gwent Levels projects to restore grazing marsh habitats at Magor Marsh and Solutia are due to start this winter. Expect to see some major works underway if you are visiting these reserves.

GWENT WILDLIFE TRUST EVENTS – WINTER/SPRING 2008-2009

Everyone is welcome to Wildlife Trust events, but please observe booking arrangements where applicable. Please come prepared from the Welsh weather on outdoor meetings – warm outdoor clothing and waterproofs, sun hat and sun screen. Stout walking shoes or boots are also essential. We recommend you have an up-to-date tetanus injection. Bring torches for dusk events. For directions to our reserves, see our Reserves Leaflet or Reserves Guide (£6 for non-members) or visit www.gwentwildlife.org

To book events (where 'booking essential' is specified), ring GWT on 01600 740600, or write to the Trust office. Places on all 'booking essential' courses are only guaranteed on receipt of payment. The Trust reserves the right to cancel courses. In such cases, full refunds will be given. In the event of a cancellation by you, we will make a full refund provided at least two weeks notice is given.

DECEMBER 2008

Tuesday 2nd

(A) Nature Conservation and Gardening – Haydn Williams
7.30pm. St Mary's Priory Centre, Abergavenny, cost £1
For more information, contact Keith White on 01873 852036

Thursday 4th (in a change from previously advertised)

(C) Bird Ringing – Denis Jackson

7.30pm. Chepstow Leisure Centre, cost £1.50 members, £2 non members
For more information, contact Hilary Lee on 01291 689326

Saturday 6th

(GWT) Winter Tree Identification – Roger James and

David Parsons
10am – 1pm. Tregadale Farm, near Usk
Booking essential – call GWT on 01600 740600

Sunday 7th

(WING) Work Task – Solutia Meadows, reed clearance
10.30am. Meet at top car park, Civic Centre, Newport
For more information, contact Roger James on 01633 215627

Monday 8th

(M) Native Amphibians, their characteristics, habitats and problems – Jay Redbond
Raffle & seasonal refreshments
7.30pm. The Ballroom, Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth, £1.50 minimum donation
For more information, contact Alison Willott on 01600 740286

Sunday 14th

(A) Reebeds in Winter – A stroll to see over-wintering wildfowl and other birds at Uskmouth
For more information, contact Keith White on 01873 852036

JANUARY 2009

Thursday 8th (NB Change of date to second Thursday)

(C) Croes Robert, a Working Nature Reserve – Keith Allen, Volunteer Reserve Warden
7.30pm. Chepstow Leisure Centre, cost £1.50 members,

Tuesday 3rd

(A) GWT Reserves – Lauri MacLean

7.30pm. St Mary's Priory Centre, Abergavenny, cost £1
For more information, contact Keith White on 01873 852036

Wednesday 4th

(T) A wildlife photographer in Finland and the Northern Highlands of Scotland – Chris Hatch

7.30pm. Lecture Hall at County Hall, Croesyceiliog, Cwmbran, free entry
Torfaen Local Group Annual Speaker Meeting – for more information, contact Vicky Coghlan on 01495 759139

Thursday 5th

(C) The Life of Bats – Peter Martin & Ellen Kershaw

Following a brief AGM
7.30pm. Chepstow Leisure Centre, cost £1.50 members, £2 non members
For more information, contact Hilary Lee on 01291 689326

Monday 9th

(M) Wildlife in the Home! – Bruce Campbell

7.30pm. The Ballroom, Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth, £1.50 minimum donation
For more information, contact Alison Willott on 01600 740286

Tuesday 10th

(U) Honey Buzzards – Steve Roberts

8pm. The Glen-yr-Afon Hotel, cost £2
For more information, contact Margaret Barford on 01495 785530

Saturday 14th

(GWT) Love a bug day

Come and explore the reserve and have some fun finding out about some of the less loved bugs! Lots of hands-on fun.
1pm to 3pm. Magor Marsh, entry free
For more information, contact GWT on 01600 740600

Wednesday 18th

(GWT) Nest box building – Rodney Morris

9.30am to 12.30pm. Magor Marsh – for adults
2pm to 4.30pm. Magor Marsh – for families
Learn how to build a home for your favourite feathered friends! This half day course with experienced local nest box builder and all round

APRIL 2009

Saturday 4th

(GWT) Easter fun day

Eggs explore the marsh with the whole family... it'll be lots of hopping good fun for everyone!

1pm to 3pm. Magor Marsh, cost £1 per child
For more information, contact GWT on 01600 740600

Sunday 5th

(WING) Work Task – Away day on a Trust reserve

10.30am. Meet at top car park, Civic Centre, Newport
For more information, contact Roger James on 01633 215627

Tuesday 7th

(A) National Amphibian & Reptile Recording Survey – Frances Baines

7.30pm. St Mary's Priory Centre, Abergavenny, cost £1
For more information, contact Keith White on 01873 852036

Tuesday 14th

(U) Dormice – Jan Kinchington

8pm. The Glen-yr-Afon Hotel, cost £2
For more information, contact Margaret Barford on 01495 785530

Thursday 30th

(C) Guided walk around Wyewood Common – Annette Murray

6pm. Wyewood Common
For more information, contact Hilary Lee on 01291 689326

CONTACTS:

(A)	Abergavenny Group Keith White	01873 852036
(BG)	Blaenau Gwent Group Rodney Morris	01495 308056

7.30pm. Chepstow Leisure Centre, cost £1.50 (members), £2 non members

For more information, contact Hilary Lee on 01291 689326

Sunday 11th

(WING) Work Task – Allt-yr-Yn, woodland management

10.30am. Meet at top car park, Civic Centre, Newport
For more information, contact Roger James on 01633 215627

Monday 12th

(M) Croes Robert – a working nature reserve (dormice and charcoal) – Keith Allen

7.30pm. Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth
For more information, contact Alison Willott on 01600 740286

Tuesday 13th

(GWT) Coppicing – Jan Kinchington

10am to 3.30pm. Croes Robert
Come and learn more about coppicing – the ancient art of cutting trees and shrubs, allowing vigorous growth and a sustainable supply of timber.

Booking essential – contact GWT on 01600 740600

Tuesday 13th

(U) A wildlife photographer in Finland and the Northern Highlands of Scotland – Chris Hatch

8pm. The Glen-yr-Afon Hotel, cost £2
For more information, contact Margaret Barford on 01495 785530

FEBRUARY 2009

Sunday 1st

(WING) Work Task – Solutia Meadows, coppicing

10.30am. Meet at top car park, Civic Centre, Newport
For more information, contact Roger James on 01633 215627

Monday 2nd

(GWT) Marshes or motorways

A guided walk around the reserve, with a talk and discussion on how the proposed new M4 will impact on the area, with an update on CALM. Refreshments available.

10am to 12pm. Magor Marsh

Booking essential – contact GWT on 01600 740600

near day centre. With help from the staff, members and other volunteers, Rodney Morris, will include a short indoor presentation showing nesting birds in their natural habitats followed by a demonstration and a practical session.

Booking essential – contact GWT on 01600 740600

MARCH 2009

Sunday 1st

(WING) Work Task – Solutia Meadows, reed clearance

10.30am. Meet at top car park, Civic Centre, Newport
For more information, contact Roger James on 01633 215627

Tuesday 3rd

(A) Wyeswood Common – Annette Murray

7.30pm. St Mary's Priory Centre, Abergavenny, cost £1
For more information, contact Keith White on 01873 852036

Thursday 5th

(C) Bird Photography – Alan Lloyd

7.30pm. Chepstow Leisure Centre, cost £1.50 members, £2 non members
For more information, contact Hilary Lee on 01291 689326

Monday 9th

(M) Bird Ringing Demystified! – Denis Jackson

7.30pm. The Ballroom, Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth, £1.50 minimum donation
For more information, contact Alison Willott on 01600 740286

Tuesday 10th

(U) Hedgehogs – Keith Jones

8pm. The Glen-yr-Afon Hotel, cost £2
For more information, contact Margaret Barford on 01495 785530

Tuesday 31st

(GWT) Wildlife management plans for gardens, smallholdings & open spaces – Ian Smith

10am to 4pm. Bridges Community Centre, Monmouth
Learn how to easily plan to increase the wildlife value of your garden, smallholding or local open space with this mix of indoor and outdoor sessions – talks, workshops and site visits. The venue is accessible by public transport, has accessible toilets, and a café serving snacks and lunches. Please check for the accessibility of the site visits.

Booking essential – contact GWT on 01600 740600

(C) Chepstow Group
Hilary Lee 01291 689326

(FOSV) Friends of Silent Valley
01600 740600

(GWT) GWT Office
01600 740600

(M) Monmouth Group
Alison Willott 01600 740286

(T) Torfaen Group
Vicky Coghlan Rees 01495 759139

(U) Usk Group
Margaret Barford 01495 785530

(WING) Wildlife in Newport Group
Roger James 01633 215627

WILDLIFE WATCH

Wildlife Watch leaders run a full programme of monthly activities for children aged between 5 and 12.

Abergavenny:

Keith Bucknall 01873 832072

Magor (between Chepstow & Newport):

Nic Hutchinson 01291 421568

WORK TASKS

Volunteers carry out a variety of practical conservation tasks on Gwent Wildlife Trust Reserves every Thursday. Sessions are led by Gwent Wildlife Trust staff.

For further information ring Jan Kinchington on 07738 231155.

WING also run reserve work tasks in and around Newport. For further details, contact Roger James on 01633 215627.

The wardens of Strawberry Cottage Wood are running work tasks, on the second Sunday morning of every month, at this site four miles north of Abergavenny. Sessions will start at 9.30am at the lay-by by the woods and finish about 12.30pm. For more information, contact Kaf and John Faragher on 01873 851562.

FRIENDS OF SILENT VALLEY

This group also runs occasional work days at the local Nature Reserve. For further details, please contact GWT on 01600 740600.

Gwent Wildlife Trust is able to offer this broad range of activities and events thanks to the generosity of the following sponsors:



BIG breathing places



Our reserves officer, Richard Bakere, was delighted to see GWT awarded first prize in the Environmental Awards scheme run by Blaenau Gwent for the new pond at Silent Valley. The site chosen was known to have been a pond in the past but had gradually silted up. Richard's engineering background helped ensure good construction, so the pond held water and filled up quickly. This is not as easy as it might appear, as we have found on our reserves in the past!

New Volunteer Group!

We are starting a new volunteer group in the Spring. The group will work on the new project at Wyewood Common and also at the adjacent Pentwyn Farm. Volunteers will carry out habitat works, including old favourites such as bracken bashing and pulling ragwort, as well as habitat and species monitoring. The group is likely to run monthly on a Sunday and we're hoping to attract new volunteers who are unable to come to work tasks during the week. We are also keen to have your suggestions for a catchy name for the group! Please contact Annette Murray, Wyewood Common Officer if you are interested on 01600 740600 or amurray@gwentwildlife.org.

Wider Environment News – Gemma Bodé

There has been a lot going on in the Wider Environment Department over the last few months. At the Monmouthshire Show we were able to talk to lots of people about a range of wildlife issues in the Countryside Matters tent. Unfortunately Usk Show was cancelled but it gave staff the chance for a weekend break in what has been a very busy summer!

We are delighted that Newport's new biodiversity officer Sinead Lynch has given their Biodiversity Partnership a new lease of life, with their first meeting in October in over seven years! We hope this is a taste of things to come and can help do great things for Newport's wildlife.

Gwent Wildlife Trust's ecological consultancy, Gwent Ecology, has been busy with several contracts for the Gwent Local Authorities, carrying out work to help develop their Local Wildlife Sites Systems. We have also carried out the grassland monitoring at Wyewood Common and visited several businesses to advise them on managing their grounds for wildlife through the Trusts' Welsh Wildlife Partnerships corporate involvement scheme.

The renewable energy proposals for the Severn Estuary are currently being looked into by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform as part of a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

While the Wildlife Trusts recognise the potential of the Severn Estuary for renewable energy generation, it must also be remembered that this is a site of European importance for the huge diversity of wildlife that can be found there. All the Wildlife Trusts bordering the Estuary now meet regularly to co-ordinate our action to protect the wildlife of the Severn Estuary.

Our aspirations for our Landscape Scale Project, Usk to Wye, are moving forward. In collaboration with the Woodland Trust, a communications brief for the proposal has now been completed and we are hoping for a staff post for 2009 to help develop funding for the Project.

Another exciting Project that is starting at the beginning of next year is the Gwent Mammal atlas. We are hoping for many volunteers to help us to record the mammals that are found across the County over a three year period, from bank voles to foxes, polecats to dormice. We will be running lots of training events next year to help with the identification of mammals and the tracks and signs that you more often see. If you are interested in taking part please get in touch with me, Gemma Bodé, Conservation Manager on 01600 740600 or gbode@gwentwildlife.org.

People and Wildlife in hibernation? – Denis Jackson

You perhaps won't be too surprised to hear that winter is the quietest time of the year for people and wildlife work. Shorter days and inclement weather send many folk into a sort of hibernation where they are reluctant to venture out of doors.

That really is a shame because there are lots of things to be found at this time of year that simply aren't about at other times. So, don't hide away for the winter or you really will miss out on a lot going on in wild Gwent. Check out the activities centrefold and remember that only dormice are allowed to stay inside until the spring!

Education at Magor

I must admit that we do have slightly fewer school bookings over the winter months. We schedule other activities into this time such as curriculum development and preparation of teaching materials. We also find it is a useful time to run courses for teachers and other teaching professionals. So far this year, we have run ten INSET (in-service training) courses on a range of subjects, from biology to language skills in the 'outdoor classroom'.

After the success of last year's placements at Magor Marsh, University of Wales have confirmed that they would like GWT to host more trainee teachers. Another four will be with us for their final teaching practice next spring for three weeks apiece.

Education at Ebbw Vale

Planning permission for the new GWT education centre at The Works site, Ebbw Vale, was submitted to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council on October 15th and we remain confident that work will begin in the near future.

Unfortunately, our recent application to the Big Lottery Fund to fund the development of our people and wildlife work in the valleys was unsuccessful. Feedback from the Lottery indicates that our bid was viewed very positively, but that this funding round had attracted a lot of bids and they simply ran out of money. We are planning to go back to the Lottery with a revised proposal.

Courses and events

In the centre pages of this Local News, you will find the list of forthcoming activities, events and courses. Many of these book up early – if there is something which takes your fancy, get your booking in as soon as you can. This year, about one third of all activities were over-subscribed and for some, we even have a waiting list.

We are working hard right now to try and get our 2009 Yearbook, which contains details of all our events, as well as much about GWT, to the printers before Christmas. Feedback suggests that the new format adopted for 2008 has proven popular so we are retaining it.

And on the subject of the Yearbook...

In 2008, we printed 10,000 copies... and by the end of September, almost all had gone!! Thousands of people who are not members of the Trust were sufficiently interested in what we do to pick one up... new members for the future perhaps?

In 2009, we plan to print at least 12,000 copies but the work doesn't stop there. The main reason we were so successful last year was because we had a veritable army of volunteers come forward to help us with the distribution process.

We'll be in touch soon with those who helped last time to formulate this year's campaign but we can ALWAYS use more HELP! So, if you think you might be able to find a home in a local shop, doctor's surgery, library or the like, please get in touch with Rachael in the office – she'd be very pleased to hear from you on 01600 740600 or at rdaniels@gwentwildlife.org.

Membership Update

As Julian mentioned in his editorial, we are entering what could be a difficult period for the Trust. Experience tells us that recruiting new members will become harder. Over the last twelve months, we have typically been recruiting around 70 members per month and losing 30 or so – a net increase of some 40 per month.

In September, however (the last month for which we had membership statistics as we went to press), our net gain in new members was only three. This is disappointing but perhaps only to be expected under the circumstances. I know that most people don't like the thought of recruiting new members – regarding the whole thing as being too much like selling, but the brutal fact is that we NEED new members if we are to continue to do our work.

It is an amazing thought that if every existing member recruited one more over the next twelve months, GWT would double in size. So, how about it? Can you ask someone else to join? Perhaps give a friend or loved one membership as a gift this Christmas. Please!

In the meantime, I had a good response to my request last time for volunteers to contact new members by telephone. We will be starting this new scheme soon and I am confident that this will help to reduce the number of new members who leave in the first few months of their membership.

Wildlife Landlord – Boxing Clever

I'm really pleased to tell you that a new volunteer, Mary Sullivan, has kindly offered to take on the running of this increasingly successful programme. Mary has some exciting ideas to develop our nest box sponsorship. Having worked with many senior politicians during her civil service career, she will make sure that I get the reports out on time too...

Nest Box Checking Project

We have had a very good response to our request for Nest Box Checkers for Spring 2009, for the many reserves with nest boxes. Hopefully the team will be at least fourteen strong! However, as there are 80 plus boxes at Silent Valley, we do need more volunteers willing to check out those boxes near Ebbw Vale. If you are interested, do please email Val Jackson, our Volunteer Officer, at vjackson@gwentwildlife.org.

Postscript

I wanted to say a big **Thank You** from all the members of the People and Wildlife Team to those members and volunteers who have helped us through the year. Without you, with such a small staff, we would achieve far less than we do and I would not be able to write to you in each Local News with all of the good things that have happened. You can all feel justifiably proud of the contributions you have made.

Local Groups Roundup – Hilary Lee

Since the last Local News went to print, members of the local groups have been involved in all manner of events and have represented the Trust and the interests of conservation, biodiversity and local wildlife in a number of ways.

Some helped at the very successful open day at Magor Marsh, which attracted over 300 people, and some at the Dingestow Open Day in August, another very successful day – all of which helps to raise the Trust's profile and gives the public a chance to chat to staff and volunteers alike and to discover some of the work we do in the county. Some of us went to lobby the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff against the proposed New M4 across the Gwent Levels, which resulted in plenty of discussion and some good publicity.

The groups are now set into the winter programme of talks and conservation tasks; we hope that the events pages will give plenty of ideas for the long winter evenings, as well as some warming workouts on the reserves! Don't forget to let your local group know if you come across any good speakers – there is always room in the programme for new ideas and topics, or tell us if there are any subjects you would like covered and we will do our best to come up with a speaker.

We look forward to meeting you at some events this winter.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Local poet celebrates wildlife

Trust member, Anne Cluysenaar, has just written *Batu-Angas: envisioning nature with Alfred Russel Wallace*. This beautiful book (a perfect Christmas present) will be fully reviewed in the spring edition of *Welsh Wildlife*, but it suffices to say now that these poems take the life and work of Wallace, one of the most important of all Victorian naturalists and thinkers, providing a collection of wonderful stimulation and celebration. The book can be ordered from local bookshops, or from the publisher, Seren, on 01656 663018 or simonhicks@seren-books.com.

A call for your churchyard wildlife records

Becca Price would love to hear from you if you are interested in her work for the Gwent Living Churchyards Project. Identifying what wildlife a churchyard has is an important first step – if you have any wildlife records for churchyards please let her know. Ring Becca Price on 01600 740600 or by e-mailing her at rprice@gwentwildlife.org.

Books for Sale

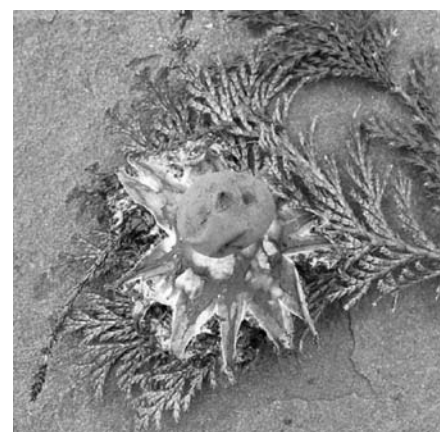
The Oxfam Shop in Monmouth has recently been donated a collection of ornithological books including a number of Gwent and Monmouthshire county bird reports dating back as far as the 1960s. The Shop manager felt that some of these may be of interest to Trust members who are welcome to call in and inspect the collection for themselves.

GWT Council

The recent GWT AGM saw four new trustees taking up their place on GWT Council – Dave Green, Chris Hatch, Alex Lambie and Richard Waller. The Trust is extremely grateful to the outgoing trustees – John Dodge, Mary Field, Steph Tyler and Alan Williams – who have all served the Trust so well over the last four years. The AGM also saw the addition of Trevor Evans, Mary Field and Rodney Morris to the ranks of our Vice-presidents, in recognition of their varied and invaluable contributions to nature conservation in Gwent.

Vice President sees stars

GWT's new Vice President Rodney Morris is not only an avid bird watcher and expert nest box installer but he has a sharp eye for a fungus. Recently he noticed an earthstar beneath a conifer in the churchyard in Beaufort. Earthstars are fungi related to puffballs but the outer layers split and peel back to give a star like shape beneath a central bulb full of spores. None of these are common but the species which Rod found, *Geastrum pectinatum*, is quite rare. According to the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland it has not previously been recorded in Gwent and there is only one previous record from south and mid Wales.



Geastrum pectinatum.

Photo credit: Rodney Morris

About the Gwent Wildlife Trust

Gwent Wildlife Trust has a vision of an environment rich in wildlife for everyone. We work to rebuild biodiversity and engage people with their environment. We manage land, campaign for wildlife, promote appreciation of wildlife and foster sustainable living.

Supported by nearly 7,000 members and 7 local members groups, we:

- Manage 30 nature reserves – 900 acres in total – including two farms
- Conserve threatened species such as dormice and water voles
- Identify and help protect Wildlife Sites
- Fight damaging development
- Provide superb educational facilities at Magor Marsh
- Run children's Wildlife Watch clubs
- Run events so people can learn more about nature

We are part of a nationwide network of 47 local Wildlife Trusts. Together we have more than 700,000 members – the Wildlife Trusts are big enough to have a real voice within local and national government.

We can only be truly effective thanks to the support of everyone who cares about the environment. If you're not already a member, please join the Trust today.

Help us make Gwent a better place for people and wildlife

Join by Direct Debit using this form and receive two welcome gifts (offer ends December 31st 2008): a copy of the GWT Nature Reserves Guide worth £6 and a copy of Ray Armstrong's critically acclaimed book 'Time to Stare', worth £19.95!

Wildlife Trust Membership also includes:

- A welcome pack full of information about your Trust.
- A copy of our Natural World and Welsh Wildlife magazines, together with our informative local newsletter, three times a year.
- Substantial discounts on all GWT courses and events.
- Most of all, the knowledge that you are doing something positive for local wildlife – helping to preserve and enhance your local patch for future generations!



About the Gwent Wildlife Trust

Please complete in block capitals

Title and Full Name
 Title and Full Name
 (Joint applications)
 Address

 Postcode Telephone
 EmailDOB

Below are the minimum membership subscription rates; we welcome additional support and donations.

Please tick appropriate box:

		Annual	Monthly
Individual	£24pa	<input type="checkbox"/>	£2.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Joint	£30pa	<input type="checkbox"/>	£2.50 <input type="checkbox"/>
Family	£36pa	<input type="checkbox"/>	£3.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced rate**	£14pa	<input type="checkbox"/>	£1.30 <input type="checkbox"/>

Amount of your choice £

(to be no less than minimum subscription rates)

Life £350

Corporate – Please contact us on **029 2048 0070** for details

* Family Membership includes membership of Wildlife Watch for all children living at the same address.

** Reduced rate membership is intended for people who, for whatever reason, cannot afford the standard rates

Children of family member

Name DOB M/F
 Name DOB M/F
 Name DOB M/F
 Name DOB M/F

Donation

I would like to make a donation of £ to help wildlife in Gwent

Method of payment (please tick)

- Direct Debit (please complete form opposite)
 Cheque for £

giftaid it If you are a UK taxpayer, Gwent Wildlife Trust can reclaim the tax paid on the money you give. Your support will achieve much more - at no extra cost to you.

Title and Full Name of taxpayer

Signature Date

I wish Gwent Wildlife Trust to treat all donations I make, including membership monies from today's date, as Gift Aid donations, so enabling the Trust to reclaim the tax until I notify you otherwise. I understand that the tax reclaim by the trust must not exceed the total amount of income tax and capital gains tax which I pay in any tax year.

Instructions to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit



Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS using a ballpoint pen and return this Instruction to Gwent Wildlife Trust, FREEPOST NE218, Seddon House, Dingestow, Monmouth NP25 4ZX

Service User Number

9	8	5	5	8	2
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Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager Bank/Building Society
 Address

..... Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Branch sort code

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Bank/Building Society A/C Number

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Membership reference number (office use only):

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Gwent Wildlife Trust Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Gwent Wildlife Trust and, if so, details may be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature(s)

..... Date

Bank and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.

This Guarantee should be detached and retained by the Payer.

The Direct Debit Guarantee

- This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the Scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.
- If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change Gwent Wildlife Trust will notify you at least 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.
- If an error is made by Gwent Wildlife Trust or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society.

Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

The Gwent Wildlife Trust will keep your details on a confidential database, which will not be shared with any third party. This information will be used to let you know about the Trust's work, to maintain your membership records, and to inform you of activities which we think may be of interest to you. All information is correct at the time of going to press. Gwent Wildlife Trust reserves the right to alter membership rates and special offers. November 2008.