



Gwent Wildlife Trust

Ymddiriedolaeth Natur Gwent



WILD ABOUT GWENT

APRIL 2015

The River Trothy Project

Andrew Nixon, GWT Usk to Wye Living Landscapes Manager

As part of its Living Landscape work, Gwent Wildlife Trust are playing host to an exciting new initiative... the River Trothy Project.

The vision of this work is to create a wildlife-rich patchwork of interconnected habitats where species can move freely through the landscape, supporting healthy watercourses to the benefit of people and wildlife.

The Trothy is a tributary of the River Wye that flows into the Wye at Monmouth. The catchment covers 144 hectares: a breath-taking rolling patchwork of farmland, meadows, woodland, brooks and streams. The area's landscape, habitats and wildlife create an inspirational place to live and work and support a healthy tourist trade. These natural systems perform other roles too; they help to manage floodwater, provide carbon storage and help protect our soils.

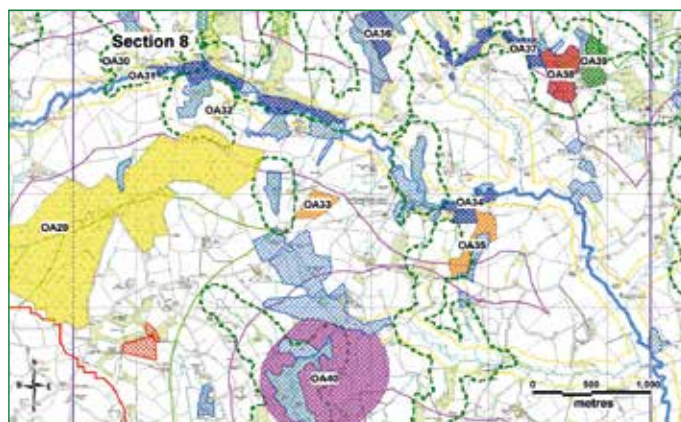
However all is not well, as over the past 50 years there have been increasing pressures from non-native invasive species, agricultural intensification, land abandonment and urbanisation. Once widespread, wildlife-rich habitats have declined and are now increasingly fragmented across the landscape. This has had a detrimental impact on our wildlife and the wider benefits that we all receive from the natural environment.

These changes have had an impact on the River Trothy; it is a river that is failing to meet 'Good Ecological Status' as required by the Water Framework Directive (only 33% of Welsh rivers do). However, the Trothy has been identified as one of the water-courses that could be enhanced to meet this objective and we can help achieve this through the creation, protection and enhancement of species-rich habitats across the catchment through working in partnership with landowners, local communities and conservation organisations.

This approach can create a win-win where our wildlife is supported and conserved as it benefits from a landscape rich in good quality habitats that are better connected, allowing species to move in accordance with their natural requirements. The river



Gwent Otter
(Andy Karran)



An example map from the opportunity mapping exercise showing 'Opportunity Areas'

will be healthier too, because it will be protected and buffered from pollutants and a build-up of silt, and river flow will be better regulated and naturalised. Importantly this can benefit people as ecosystem services such as storm water management, climate change mitigation, sustainable food production, cleaner water, cleaner air and landscape are all enhanced.

In 2014, funding from Natural Resources Wales enabled us to do a desk-based study of the River Trothy catchment. The study was a starting point for future conservation activity and helped us to identify potential areas for habitat management. This helps us to target our efforts to best effect and undertake work in a strategic way that promotes connectivity.

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Gwent Wildlife Trust, Seddon House, Dingestow, Monmouth NP25 4DY

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Reg Charity No: 242619 Limited Liability Company No: 812535

Photograph top left: Rabbit (David Cole)

We Count for Wildlife – Monmouth

Andy Karran, GWT Local Wildlife Sites Officer

Following on from successful events in Caldicot and Abergavenny over the last two years, we are pleased to announce the 'We Count for Wildlife' event will be returning and will be held in Monmouth this year.

This event which is being organised by, amongst others, Monmouthshire Environment Partnership Board, Monmouthshire County Council, Wye Valley AONB and Gwent Wildlife Trust, will take place on Friday 26th and Saturday 27th June 2015.

On the Friday, various local schools will be invited along to take part in a series of wildlife activities including pond-dipping, hedgerows studies and river sampling. Later on the Friday, there will be a bat talk and walk and hopefully some moth trapping, which will be open to the general public.

On the Saturday, between 10am and 4pm, the event will be open to everyone. There will be various walks, stalls and experts on hand at key locations so that we can all learn about the great wildlife that occurs within Monmouth. Whilst the programme for the day is still being developed, it is anticipated the event will be split over a number of sites including Drybridge Community Nature Park, Vauxhall Fields (with kind permission of the owner), Monmouth Cemetery and the 'Two River Meadows' area. Maps will be provided to allow people to move between sites and participate in the activities which are likely to include Wildlife Walks, Wildflower Identification, Pond Dipping, River Sampling and most excitingly Canoeing on the River Monnow, amongst others.

The aim of the day will be to see how many species we can record in the area but most importantly it will be to have fun and learn about all the great wildlife we have on our doorstep. So whatever your wildlife knowledge, please come along, join in and enjoy the wildlife Monmouth has to offer. **More details will be posted on our Facebook page and the GWT website nearer the time.**

<1 The study took into account known wildlife-rich habitats and records of protected species. It also considered the proximity of land to the river and its tributaries as works undertaken close to watercourses are likely to have the greatest benefit.

Examples of the sort of conservation activity we will undertake include: creation of habitat along watercourses; tree planting; orchard creation; and the creation and management of ponds and wetlands. This activity has already started and at the time of writing, new woodlands and orchards are being planted. Generous support from Natural Resources Wales has enabled us to be proactive, meeting with landowners to advise and support them with habitat creation and

enhancement works. Our target is to create ten hectares of new habitat this year with a further twenty hectares over the next two years.

Furthermore, a steering group of partner organisations is being established to help direct the project. This includes both local conservation organisations and landowner representation. Currently GWT are seeking landowners and farmers in the catchment that are keen to be involved.

If you can assist us with our activities or would simply like to know more about the project then please contact either Andy Karran or Andrew Nixon on 01600 740600 or email akarran@gwentwildlife.org.

Boost for Wetland Mammals on the Gwent Levels



Water vole at Magor Marsh (Cate Barrow)

Alice Rees, GWT Water Vole Project Officer

We are thrilled to announce the launch of an exciting new Wetland Mammals Project on the Gwent Levels.

The project is supported by the Co-operative's Welsh Wildlife Heroes campaign which is run by Wildlife Trusts Wales and funded entirely by the money collected from the single-use carrier bag charge in The Co-operative food stores in Wales.

Through a series of talks, training days and events, we will see local communities and Co-operative staff, customers and members learn about the wonderful wildlife of the Gwent Levels, including the water vole, Britain's fastest declining wild mammal. Water voles were once a common sight, remembered affectionately by many local people. Sadly their numbers have declined in recent years but a population is thriving at Gwent Wildlife Trust's Magor Marsh nature reserve after over 200 of the animals were reintroduced there in 2012.

The project will also invite the community

to take part in surveys about otters, another key wetland species whose increasing population and range means many are now being killed on our road networks.

Over £1m is being shared between grass-roots environmental projects across Wales as part of a three-year partnership with The Co-operative. The focus of the project is supporting native species and improving habitats for some of Wales' rarest and most endangered wildlife, and empowering the people of Wales to become wildlife heroes themselves by taking small steps in their gardens or local communities.

For more information about the project and to find out how to get involved, please contact Alice Rees, Water Vole Project Officer on arees@gwentwildlife.org.



**Arwyr Bywyd
Gwylt Cymru**
**Welsh Wildlife
Heroes**

The **co-operative**
Cymru/Wales





Tom & Richard, up a tree
(Liz Winstanley)



Barn owl (Chris Hatch)



Buddying up for barn owls

Veronika Brannovic, GWT Eastern Valleys Living Landscape Manager

If you'd gone down to the woods recently, you would have been in for a bit of a surprise – a new barn owl nesting box that's been installed at Silent Valley Nature Reserve.

Two of Gwent Wildlife Trusts Reserves Officers were putting their newly acquired climbing skills to the test, working together to place a box high up a tree. Last year, Tom and Richard attended training in climbing, funded by BIG Lottery, which means they can carry out more woodland management and save GWT money in the longer term. We'll be working with qualified ecologists to monitor the use of the newly installed boxes and whether they are effective at helping barn owls to successfully rear chicks. We won't know

this for a number of years but will keep you posted.

More boxes are being installed at locations throughout Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen as part of the Welsh Wildlife Heroes project, funded by the Co-operative through Wildlife Trust Wales, alongside habitat improvements for barn owls (which will also benefit many other species). We're very keen to hear about barn owls throughout Gwent – do you hear or see them where you live? Did you see them in the past? We'd really like to hear from you so that we can build up a picture of how widespread barn owls were in the past and where to look for them now.

Contact any member of the Eastern Valleys Living Landscape team on 01495 307525 or email vbrannovic@gwentwildlife.org.

Staff News

This February, our Fundraising & Marketing Officer, Liesel Townley, left us to take up the mantle of director at the event management consultancy, Carilo.

We wish Liesel all the best with her exciting new venture. And we're delighted to welcome some new staff members to the team. Firstly, Debbie Stenner will be our new Senior Fundraising & Partnerships Officer. Debbie has much experience in fundraising for conservation charities. We'll also be joined by Julian Vallance who steps up as our PR & Communications Officer. GWT has never had a dedicated comms officer before and we're looking to working with Julian to raise our media profile. Finally, Dipti Patel will be our new Membership Support Officer, working with Leigh and Kay in the office to take care of all our members. **And congratulations to James Byrne, Wildlife Trusts Wales' Living Landscapes Advocacy Officer, and his wife Emma on the arrival of their new baby, Rory.**

Anne Cluysenaar

Gemma Bodé, GWT Gwent Levels Living Landscape Manager

We were very saddened to hear of the death of Anne who died in November of last year.

Anne was a very well-known poet whose work included *Envisioning Nature with Alfred Russel Wallace* (2008) and was the owner of a Local Wildlife Site brimming with important wildlife at Little Wentwood near Llantrisant. Anne had also been one of our volunteers who had helped us with a number of projects including the water vole re-introduction at Magor Marsh. She was always very jolly, inquisitive and was clearly fascinated by the natural world. She was

most recently seeking inspiration for new verses for a book about the Gwent Levels.

Last year, she sent me a message with a poem she had been writing about the "M4 relief ('relief!') road", which I think she would have loved us to share with our members.

In The Making

Anne Cluysenaar

*We are our own Romans.
Whatever's unique and local
fair game to be interrupted.*

*But the Romans, they could go home.
Where shall we go, when home,
the planet, has changed for ever?*

*Before our own little sun
makes the ice and the deserts vanish,
to become what we'll never see,*

*we might choose to save places like this?
Places we haven't made
and could not have invented.*

*Where once was a wide plain
now there is sea, the Severn
loosed from its ancient bed.*

*Archipelago in the making,
these edges, their rise and fall
below and above sea level,*

*bathe in a luminous flow -
sweet and salt waters
rippling the air with light.*

*Early people, come from the sea,
knew water – their roads uphill
would have been these mountain rivers.*

*Over marsh, they wove hurdles of hazel.
And even the Romans kept
main roads to the higher ground.*

If not love and respect, foresight?

1. Green Winged Orchid
(Andy Karran)



2. Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary
(Andy Karran)



Gwent's Wildlife – Ten of the best to look for this Spring & Summer

Andy Karran, GWT Local Wildlife Sites Officer

Gwent has much superb wildlife and even the commonest species are great to get out and see.

We are however lucky enough to have a quite a few scarcer species. Trying to track these down can be an exciting challenge and take you to some of our very best habitats. The following highlights ten of our more special species as well as where and when to find them.

1. Green Winged Orchid

This attractive orchid is sadly much scarcer now than it used to be, but can still be found in meadows in the east of Gwent. It is variable in colour ranging from purple to pink to white but always with the distinctive parallel green veins on the sepal part of the flower.

Where: Confined to a relatively small number of sites in the east of Gwent. See them at New Grove Meadows – GWT Reserve (SO501 066)* where there are

1,000's of spikes along with many other great wildflowers in the hay meadows.

When: May – early June.

2. Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary

This charming butterfly, like the very similar Pearl Bordered Fritillary is much reduced across the UK. Unlike the Pearl Bordered, the Small Pearl Bordered still occurs within Gwent. It is a species that thrives in damp grassland and moors and so principally occurs in the north and west of Gwent. The presence of Marsh Violet (and other violets) is vital for its survival as they are the caterpillar's food-plant. We are managing habitat at Silent Valley for the benefit of this species.

Where: Silent Valley – GWT Reserve (SO187 062)*

When: Late May – early July.

3. Nightjar

This scarce migratory species arrives in Gwent in May. It breeds principally in

areas of clear-fell in plantation woodlands, particularly where heath is regenerating. It is nocturnal, feeding on moths, but can readily be located by its distinctive churring song.

Where: Ebbw Forest, Wentwood Forest and Trellech Woodlands including Beacon Hill – GWT managed Reserve (SO515 054)*

When: May – July. Note our GWT guided walk on Thursday 2nd July, 9pm until late.**

4. Butterwort

This species favours acidic bogs, wet heaths and moorland. It is insectivorous, catching insects on their slimy leaves to supplement the nutrients in these impoverished soils. It occurs in a few upland sites in the very north of Gwent but apart from this it is confined to our Henllys Bog Reserve.

Where: Henllys Bog – GWT Reserve (ST263 926)*. Look out for other scarce species on site such as Marsh Helleborine and Fragrant Orchid.

When: May – July.

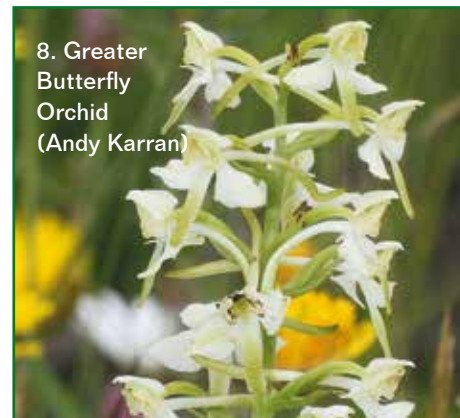
6. Blue-eyed Grass (Andy Karran)



7. Water Vole (Andy Karran)



8. Greater Butterfly Orchid
(Andy Karran)

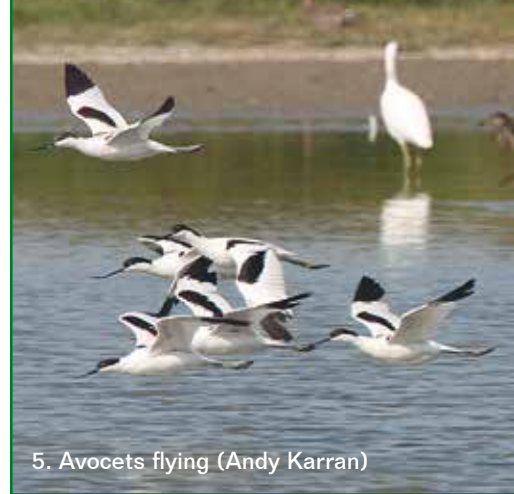


3. Pale Prominent (Nightjar food) (Andy Karran)



The Nightjars diet includes large moths such as the superbly camouflaged Pale Prominent.

4. Butterwort (Andy Karran)



5. Avocets flying (Andy Karran)

5. Avocet

These attractive waders with their distinctive upturned beaks used to be a very scarce bird in Gwent. However, since 2003 they have been breeding annually at the Goldcliff Lagoons part of Natural Resources Wales' Newport Wetlands Reserve. Research is currently being undertaken to improve their breeding success.

Where: Goldcliff Lagoons (ST369 827)

When: All year round but breeding in Spring and Summer

6. Blue-eyed Grass

This attractive iris (not a grass at all) is only known to be definitely native in the UK in a few sites in Northern Ireland. Those found within some of the damp fields on our Springdale Farm Reserve may be the only native population of this species in mainland UK. Whether native or not, they are well worth seeking out, together with the array of other wildflowers and invertebrates within the reserves meadows and woodland.

Where: Springdale Farm – GWT Reserve (ST410 991)*

When: June – July

7. Water Vole

As you likely know the Water Vole has suffered catastrophic losses in recent

years. Within Gwent they are still present in a few places such as the River Monnow and thanks to a reintroduction programme, together with ongoing conservation work, are doing well on our Magor Marsh Reserve. They are quite secretive but the reen outside the visitor centre at Magor Marsh is a great place to see them. We are always looking for volunteers to help with our Water Vole project; if you are interested please contact Alice Rees at arees@gwentwildlife.org.

Where: Magor Marsh – GWT Reserve (ST428 866)*

When: All year round but more active in Spring and Summer

8. Greater Butterfly Orchid

This is another species that is much declined. However it is still present within Gwent, unlike its close relative the Lesser Butterfly Orchid which is now sadly likely to be extinct. This beautiful orchid occurs in both grasslands and woodlands principally in the east of Gwent. It smells faintly of vanilla which attracts moths that pollinate it at night.

Where: Pentwyn Farm – GWT Reserve (SO523 094)*

When: June. Note our GWT guided walks at Pentwyn on Wednesday 10th & 17th June 10am – 12:30pm**

9. Cetti's Warbler

This warbler only colonised the UK in the 1960's and was not recorded in Gwent until 1988. The population has since thrived and Gwent (particularly 'The Levels') is one of the Welsh strongholds. Unusually, unlike most other warblers it stays with us for the winter. The bird is very secretive but can easily be detected by its distinctive explosive song.

Where: Magor Marsh – GWT Reserve (ST428 866)*

When: All year round but sing more in Spring and Summer

10. White-legged Damselfly

This dainty damselfly is quite a scarce species, with a southerly distribution making Gwent an important area for it within Wales. It has distinctive flattened, white legs that distinguish it from a number of similar species. It favours slow-flowing rivers such as the Wye but can be found over grassland adjacent to the river, particularly when newly emerged.

Where: Dixon Embankment – GWT Reserve (SO527 149)*

When: Late May – July

So get out there and see if you can find them. We would be interested to hear if you can find them all during 2015 and of any other interesting species you may find on our reserves throughout the year.



9. Cetti's Warbler (Andy Karran)



10. White Legged Damselfly (Andy Karran)

*Details of all our reserves can be found on our website at www.gwentwildlife.org/wildlife/reserves.

**Booking essential. See our events guide or website at www.gwentwildlife.org/whats-on for more details.



Emperor Moth (Andy Karran)

LOCAL GROUP CONTACTS

Abergavenny Local Group

Keith White 01873 852036
keith.white@tesco.net

Blaenau Gwent Local Group

Jeff Smith 01495 371423
jeff@marinestreet.fsnet.co.uk

Chepstow Local Group

Hilary Lee 01291 689326
hilary-lee@tiscali.co.uk

GWT Office 01600 740600
info@gwentwildlife.org

Monmouth Local Group

Alison Willott 01600 740286
alisonwillott@hotmail.com

Torfaen Local Group

Vicky Hannaford 01495 759139
v.hannaford@hotmail.co.uk

Usk Local Group

David Gale 01291 673141
david@gale4241.fsworld.co.uk

Wildlife in Newport Group

Roger James 01633 263374
smallranunculus@btinternet.com

Corporate Members

Platinum

Caldicot &
Wentlooge Levels
IDB
TATA Steel

Silver

Pinnacle

Bronze

Ancre Hill
Vineyard

Gold

Advanced Elastomer
General Dynamics
Systems
Eastman
ABP

TriWall Europe
Frank Sutton
Mandarin Stone
Marshalls
Zokit



April to July 2015

Full and up to date details of all these courses can be found on www.gwentwildlife.org/whats-on

■ APRIL

Major Roadworks Ahead: Environmental Impact

Speaker: Costain

Tuesday 7th April, 7.30pm

St Michael's Centre, Abergavenny
Contact: GWT Abergavenny Local Group,
01873 852036
Cost: £2

Wildplay @ Magor Marsh – Birds, Birds, Birds!

Leaders: Caroline Williams, Petra
Mitchard, & Kathy Barclay

Thursday 9th April, 1pm – 4pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £7.50 per child (members),
£8.50 non-members
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

The Life of a Badger

Speaker: Steve Clarke

Tuesday 14th April, 7.30pm

The Ballroom, Glen-yr-Afon House Hotel, Usk
Contact: GWT Usk Local Group, 01291 673141
Cost: £2, accompanied children under 16 FREE

Welsh Policy & Planning

Tutor: Sorrel Jones

Saturday 18th April, 10am – 12pm

St Michaels Centre, Abergavenny
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £10 members, £15 non-members
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Livestock Fencing Course

Tutor: Kevin Williams

Thursday 23rd April, 10am – 4pm

Ty Mawr Convent, near Trellech
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: FREE – kindly funded by Biffa Award
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

■ MAY

Beginners Guide to Woodland Management

Tutor: Tim Green

Thursday 7th May, 10am – 3.30pm

Springdale Farm, near Usk
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £10 members, £15 non-members
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Bat Walk & Talk

Tutor: Steve Wadley

Friday 8th May, 7.30pm – 9.30pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £3 members, £4 non-members
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Breeding Birds Identification – Intermediate

Tutor: Andy Karran

Wednesday 13th May, 6am – 10am

Silent Valley, near Ebbw Vale
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £6 members, £9 non-members
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Grand Plant Sale & Bazaar

Hosts: GWT Chepstow Local Group

Saturday 16th May, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Palmer Centre, Cormeilles Square,
Chepstow NP16 5LH
Contact: GWT Chepstow Local Group,
01291 689326
Cost: FREE admission

Nature in Needle Felt

Tutor: Becky Ward

Saturday 16th May, 10.30am – 4pm

ERC, near Ebbw Vale
Contact: GWT, 01495 307525
Cost: £10
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Bat Walk & Talk

Leader: Lindi Rich

Saturday 16th May, 8pm – 10pm

Cwmillery Lakes, near Abertillery
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £4 members, £6 non-members
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Race for Wildlife 10K & Family Fun Run

Host: Julian Vallance

Sunday 17th May, 10.30am

Undy Athletics Football Club, Undy
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £14 10K (£12 for UK Athletics
Members), £5 Fun Run
Online booking available: see
www.gwentwildlife.org

Silent Valley Spring Walk

Leader: Tom Eyles

Thursday 21st May, 10am – 4.30pm

Silent Valley, near Ebbw Vale
Contact: GWT, 01495 307525
Cost: FREE
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Flower Power Fun Day

Hosts: Kathy Barclay & Petra Mitchard

Saturday 23rd May, 1pm – 4pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600
Cost: £1.50 children (2 and over), adults FREE

Wildplay @ Magor Marsh – Water Works

Leaders: Caroline Williams, Petra
Mitchard, & Kathy Barclay

Thursday 28th May, 1pm – 4pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport
Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £7.50 per child (members),
£8.50 non-members
BOOKING ESSENTIAL

■ JUNE

From Wasteland to Wildlife

Leader: **Andy Karran**

Wednesday 3rd June, 10am – 12.30pm

Cefn Fforest Ecopark, near Blackwood

Contact: GWT, 01495 307525

Cost: FREE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Photographing Orchids and other Wild Flowers

Tutor: **Chris Hatch**

Saturday 6th June, 10am – 2pm

Pentwyn Farm, near Monmouth

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £20 members, £25 non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Ramble at Magor Marsh & Barecroft Common

Leader: **Richard Bakere**

Sunday 7th June, 2pm – 4.30pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: FREE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Charcoal Making

Tutor: **Jan Kinchington**

Wednesday 10th June, 10am – 4pm

Croes Robert, near Monmouth

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £10 members, £15 non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Monmouthshire Meadows Open Day

Host: **Monmouthshire Meadows Group & GWT**

Sunday 14th June

Ty Mawr Convent, near Monmouth

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: FREE

Open Gardens at Coed Cefn

Hosts: **GWT Monmouth Local Group**

Sunday 14th June, 2pm – 6pm

Coed Cefn, Raglan, near Monmouth

Contact: GWT Monmouth Local Group,

01600 740286

Cost: £3.50 admission in aid of Gwent Wildlife Trust (small children free)

Managing Urban Sites for Wildflowers

Tutor: **Anna Guzzo**

Tuesday 16th June, 10am – 12pm

ERC, near Ebbw Vale

Contact: GWT, 01495 307525

Cost: FREE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Meadow Plant Identification – Intermediate Course

Tutor: **Andy Karran**

Wednesday 17th June, 10am – 12.30pm

Pentwyn Farm, near Monmouth

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £6 members, £9 non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Flight of the Fritillaries

Tutor: **Steve Williams**

Friday 19th June, 10.30am – 3pm

Ebenezer Centre, Pontnewynydd, near Pontypool

Contact: GWT, 01495 307525

Cost: FREE for members, £5 for non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Wetlands in Bloom

Leader: **Roger James**

Saturday 20th June, 1.45pm – 3.30pm

Newport Wetlands Centre, near Newport

Contact: Kevin Dupé, 01633 275813

Cost: FREE

Upland Birds Guided Walk

Leaders: **Chris Hatch & Tom Eyles**

Sunday 21st June, 10am – 3pm

Blaenafon World Heritage Landscape

Contact: GWT, 01495 307525

Cost: £8 members, £10 non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

National Gardens Scheme Open Day at Pentwyn Farm

Host: **Andrew Nixon**

Sunday 21st June, 10am – 4pm

Pentwyn Farm, near Monmouth

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £3 adults, children FREE

Wildlife Walks – Rogiet Country Park

Leaders: **Roger James & the NCC Green Team**

Monday 22nd June, 10am – 12.30pm

Rogiet Country Park car park,

near Newport

Contact: Newport City Council,

Katie Godfrey 01633 210557

Cost: FREE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Bat Walk & Talk

Leader: **Lindi Rich**

Saturday 27th June, 8pm – 10pm

Pen y Fan Pond Country Park, near Oakdale

(Caerphilly Borough)

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £4 members, £6 non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Wildlife Walks – Magor Marsh

Leaders: **Roger James & the NCC Green Team**

Monday 29th June, 10am – 12.30pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport

Contact: Newport City Council,

Katie Godfrey 01633 210557

Cost: FREE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

■ JULY

Wildlife Walks – Newport Wetlands

Leaders: **Roger James & the NCC Green Team**

Wednesday 1st July, 10am – 1pm

Newport Wetlands car park

Contact: Newport City Council, Katie Godfrey

01633 210557

Cost: FREE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

An Introduction to Dormice

Tutor: **Jan Kinchington**

Saturday 4th July, 10am – 11.30am

Croes Robert Reserve, near Monmouth

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £5 members, £8 non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Wildlife Walks – Maesglas Landfill Site

Leaders: **Roger James & the NCC Green Team**

Monday 6th July, 10am – 12.30pm

Maesglas Landfill site car park

Contact: Newport City Council,

Katie Godfrey 01633 210557

Cost: FREE

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Photographing Plants, Pollinators & Dragonflies

Tutor: **Chris Hatch**

Saturday 11th July, 10am – 4pm

Blaenafon World Heritage Landscape

Contact: GWT, 01495 307525

Cost: £20 members, £25 non-members

BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Magor Marsh Grand Summer Fun Day

Hosts: **Kathy Barclay & Petra Mitchard**

Saturday 11th July, 1pm – 5pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £1 per child, adults free (members); £2

adults, £1 children, £5 families (non-members)

Walking in the World Heritage Site

Leader: **Frank Olding**

Wednesday 15th July, 10am – 12.30pm

Garn Lakes, Blaenafon

Contact: GWT, 01495 307525

Cost: FREE BOOKING ESSENTIAL

Marshy Monday

Host: **Petra Mitchard**

Monday 20th July, 1pm – 3pm

Magor Marsh, near Newport

Contact: GWT, 01600 740600

Cost: £2 children (2 and over), adults FREE,

member discount £1

Gardening for Wildlife

Leader: **Anna Guzzo**

Tuesday 21st July, 11am – 3pm

ERC, near Ebbw Vale

Contact: GWT, 01495 307525

Cost: FREE



Necklace Ground Beetle
(Ann & Gordon Cryer)

Carabus monilis at Newgrove Meadows reserve

Michael Kilner,
GWT Trustee & Volunteer

On 12th August last year, I attended the Gwent Wildlife Trust open day at Dingestow Court.

Whilst helping out on the 'Your wildlife questions answered' stall, I met Ann and Gordon Cryer, who showed me a picture of a beetle that they had seen at nearby Newgrove Meadows reserve. The beetle was clearly one of the predatory carabid beetles, but was a remarkable metallic green that I had not seen before. Out of curiosity I asked them to send the picture to me for a proper identification.

A few days later the email arrived, and after some research and consultation the beetle was identified as *Carabus monilis*. The pattern of fine ribs and dots on the elytra (wing cases) are distinctive to this species.

The specimen was seen on 9th June 2014 in one of the middle fields at Newgrove Meadows. The beetle is commonly known as the Necklace Ground Beetle. It is Nationally Scarce (Notable B) and is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species as it has declined at a faster rate than any other UK ground beetle species. There are no Gwent records of this species from within the last 50 years, although previously the species was common and widespread in England and Wales. *C. monilis* is incapable of flight, and is therefore only able to disperse by running, and so it is vulnerable to habitat loss and fragmentation.

C. monilis thrives best in unimproved grassland habitats where no pesticides are used and where field edges have good biodiversity. The management regime at Newgrove Meadows is therefore perfect for this beetle. The identification of *Carabus monilis* at Newgrove Meadows reserve is an indication that the management practices of GWT in preserving traditional hay-meadows is beneficial for insects as well as the plant life for which the site is better known.

My thanks go to Ann and Gordon Cryer for their helpfulness in providing information about this record, and for their keen observation skills in noticing this rare and interesting species.



Cut and uncut areas of Dixon Embankment Nature Reserve (Tim Green)

Forgotten Corners – Dixon Embankment Nature Reserve

Tim Green, GWT Reserves Officer

Situated on the side of the very busy A40 lies Dixon Embankment, which was created when the A40 was widened into a dual carriageway and exists to stop the road falling into the river Wye.

Due to its disturbed nature, Dixon Embankment is probably best known for its bee orchids.

However the ungrazed grassland has become a stronghold for both the marbled white butterfly and the pyramidal orchid with over 450 spikes being counted in summer 2014.

As the reserve is ungrazed, it requires manual cutting to prevent scrub encroachment taking over the grassland so on a windy but mild December day, the mid-week volunteers and myself assembled at Dixon Embankment Nature Reserve where we were met by Ian Rappel (CEO) and Chris Reed (Assistant Reserves officer) for a hard day's work cutting and raking the grassland area.

Chris, Ian and I were armed with brush cutters to cut back any encroaching bramble and the season's grass growth, whilst the team of dedicated volunteers raking off the arisings into piles suitable for hibernating adders and grass snakes.

Some areas of long grass were left in a mosaic effect to provide over wintering habitat for invertebrates, along with the developing ant hills that limit the use of larger machinery on site.

This important hands-on work was supported by the money raised in last year's Forgotten Corners appeal. GWT would like to say a big thank you to everyone who contributed – we're looking forward to seeing how Dixon Embankment looks in spring.



Above: Bee orchid (Tim Green)
Below: Pyramidal orchid (Tim Green)



Spring is in the air – watch out for our water voles!

Alice Rees, GWT Water Vole Project Officer

It's that time of year again; the days are getting longer, the air is losing its chill – spring is coming! Spring flowers are emerging and birds are busy building their nests. Maybe you've even seen your first bumble bee of the year?

Perhaps I'm biased, but what I'm most looking forward to this spring is seeing our wild water voles return to centre stage at Magor Marsh. They do not hibernate during the winter, but they do slow down quite a bit (don't we all?) and it can be tricky to see them. Once it starts getting warmer in April and May however, Ratty the water vole and his friends will be busy making their own nests as they start to raise their first young of the year. They love munching on the new fresh green growth as plants are pushing through the reed banks: you can even hear them crunching away if you are quiet enough. But they are especially drawn to the sweet apples we put out on our water vole monitoring rafts each week! The water voles became quite famous last year as



Water vole taking some lunch (Cate Barrow)

they could be seen regularly sitting on the rafts right next to Magor Marsh Education Centre, in full view of our visitors.

Of course, we cannot guarantee that will happen again this year (these are wild animals after all) but why not pop along to Magor Marsh anyway this spring or summer to take a look? You might see water voles, you might not, but you certainly will see all the other wonderful wildlife and tranquillity this magnificent nature reserve has to offer.

There's parking and it's free, so what's stopping you!

Big Thank You's

We'd like to thank Monmouthshire Building Society Acorn Fund for the generous donation of £425 for education equipment for our intrepid team of Wildlife Warriors and other visitors to the reserve.

Kathy and Petra have purchased rucksacks for visitors complete with bug pots, magnifiers and spotter sheets. We have a brand new tarpaulin and a wheel barrow, secateurs and gloves for the warriors to work on the reserve.

We have also received £347 from Waitrose in Caldicot for the Education Centre at Magor Marsh. This will help pay for the running of Wildlife Warriors next year. Thanks to all those who put their green tokens in the right pot during January!

Welsh Wildlife

Don't forget that the electronic copy of Welsh Wildlife is available on our website.

GWT Grand Summer Draw 2015

Hopefully you'll all have noticed the raffle tickets included in this mailing. The star prize this year is an amazing cash prize of £500! A huge thank you to Eastman Chemicals for contributing towards this great prize.

Each ticket costs £1 and if you'd like to buy some (or sell them to family, friends and neighbours), please send the payment along with the ticket stubs (filled in with a minimum of a surname and contact phone number) in the FREEPOST envelope provided. The draw will take place at our AGM on Wednesday 16th September 2015, so you must ensure your tickets arrive at our offices by midday on 16th at the very latest. For more tickets, call the office on 01600 740600.

Please note there is no obligation to buy or return the unsold tickets. Each book of tickets only costs GWT a few pence to produce and the amount we raise far exceeds our small costs. But why not have a flutter – safe in the knowledge that your support is going to the wonderful cause of protecting our beautiful wildlife in Gwent.

How much can you raise in our 2015 Corporate £50 Challenge?



Last summer, five teams joined our 'Corporate £50 Challenge': Gabb & Co Solicitors, NFU Mutual, SET Office Supplies, Ancre Hill Estates, Carillion Civil Engineering and UHY Hacker Young

The aim of the challenge was for teams to raise as much money as possible in twelve weeks after being given £50 from GWT to kick start their fundraising. As well as raising funds, the challenge was a great way for individuals to learn a new skill and for organisations to engage, motivate, and inspire employees whilst having fun. During the twelve weeks, teams undertook activities such as cake sales, raffles, sweet stalls, tombola's and a bowling night.

We will be launching our 2015 'Corporate £50 Challenge', kindly sponsored by Ancre Hill Estates, on Thursday 4th June



at their Vineyard in Monmouth. At the event, signed up teams will be given their fundraising packs, have a chance to network and be given their £50 note.

For further information and to register your interest, please contact Julian Vallance, PR & Communications Officer on 01600 740600 or jvallance@gwentwildlife.org.



Bunting for GWT (Leigh Danziger)

Welcome to our new Corporate Members...

Zokit.

New corporate member, Zokit, is a business

growth hub, which pops up at various venues across SE Wales. They connect businesses and community through their Networking and Business Wisdom events and through social media and word of mouth.

Founder and director Neil Lloyd says "I remember exploring Magor Marsh as a boy and I still visit often. It's a fantastic place for kids and grown-ups alike to connect with nature and spot interesting flora and fauna across the seasons. We are really pleased to be a corporate member of Gwent Wildlife Trust and be involved in promoting the wonderful wildlife we have right here on our doorstep."

Zokit will be running some of their events from reserves managed by Gwent Wildlife Trust. To find out more visit zokit.co.uk



We'd also like to welcome Associated British Ports as our

latest Gold level corporate member. ABP is the UK's leading port operator, handling a vast array of cargo, with South Wales ports at Newport, Cardiff, Barry, Swansea and Port Talbot. ABP takes its environmental responsibilities seriously and is delighted to be supporting a local conservation charity in this way.

Matthew Kennerley, Director of ABP South Wales, said "We're very pleased to be able to support the work of Gwent Wildlife Trust. As a business based in a marine environment, we're particularly interested in the work being done on the Gwent Levels to preserve this wonderful habitat."

What goes up must come down – the hidden menace of balloons and sky lanterns

Leigh Danziger, GWT Finance, Administration & Membership Officer

Have you ever wondered what happens to your party balloons or lanterns once the event is over?

Sky lanterns, also known as Chinese lanterns, are a problem for wildlife and for farmers. They look beautiful as they float away in the sky but the problem is where they go and where they land. They frighten livestock and can be ingested by cattle, puncturing and ripping internal organs, which could lead to an agonising death. Wire and metal bands can also be accidentally harvested and so end up in haylage and silage. These again can be ingested by livestock. A piece of wire as small as a hair grip can be fatal to a cow. Sky Lanterns also pose a fire risk to hay barns, winter straw, thatched roofs, etc – thousands of pounds of feed and bedding going up in flames.

Lanterns also pose a threat to wildlife. In 2011 Sussex Wildlife Trust reported injuries to an owl and in the same year, the BBC reported that a Barn owl was found dead on a Gloucestershire farm, entangled in a Sky Lantern.

Balloons can cause similar problems for wildlife and livestock. Once released, where do they go? Balloons landing in grass fields can be mistakenly eaten by grazing livestock or contaminate hay. A big problem is balloons entering watercourses and the sea. With a Welsh coastline of 1,317 miles (2,120 km), this is a concern. Floating balloons can be mistaken for jellyfish and are ingested by animals such as turtles, blocking the digestive tract and causing the animal to starve to death. There have also been reports of latex (rubber) and mylar (foil) balloons found in the digestive track of dead whales and dolphins. Seals and fish may also be at risk. Alternatively animals become entangled in the ribbon/string and drown; animals particularly at risk are marine turtles and some seabirds.

Falling matter from balloon releases can be considered littering. In a report from Keep Wales Tidy, it was stated that 'over 63,000 balloons were collected on surveyed beaches worldwide.'

Mylar balloons are a synthetic, metallised plastic or nylon material. Though not biodegradable, they can be recycled if disposed of properly. Natural latex is biodegradable, but after adding chemicals and artificial dyes, how natural does the latex become?

The balloon industry quotes DK Bourchette 1989 research which says it takes six months for a latex balloon to decompose, the same time as an oak leaf. Keep Wales Tidy and Keep Scotland Beautiful have both raised



Razorbill entangled in a balloon (Christine McGuinness Marine Conservation Society)



concerns over the accuracy and independent nature of the report. An article in Soil Biology and Biochemistry said that '54% of oak leaves decompose in a two-year period, and it takes about four years for oak leaves to completely degrade under natural conditions.' Balloons in seawater deteriorate slower than in air; they still retain their elasticity after twelve months. And of course, six months is ample time for balloons to be eaten by wildlife and livestock.

Large balloon and Sky Lantern releases can also interfere with air traffic control and can cause the coastguard to be unnecessarily called out. You may be thinking, 'I'm not planning a lantern or balloon release', but what about the balloons and ribbons from your children's birthday party or local events. Those balloons may contribute to the problem. So what can we do? Dispose of balloons properly or use fewer balloons, reducing waste going to landfill. Find alternatives. Below are just some ideas of reusable and more environmentally friendly options: blow bubbles, use solar fairy lights, banners, bunting, ribbons/flags, biodegradable streamers, fly kites, use garden spinners/pinwheels, origami, tissue-paper pompoms, flower petals/biodegradable confetti, candles or plant a tree. GWT member and sewing tutor' Jan Millet, along with students from her sewing classes, made over 25 metres of bunting for GWT to use at shows and events. The black, white and green bunting will definitely help us stand out and, being reusable, we can use it time and again. Thank you to all who contributed. Why not copy some of the ideas and use reusable eco-friendly decorations for your events?

More information about the problems of balloons and lanterns, and what you can do to help, can be found from the following organisations: Marine Conservation Society, National Outdoor Events Association, Keep Wales Tidy, Clean Virginia Waterways and www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/cleanva/Index.html.



Fairy parasol (Jane Corey)



Robin
(Dan
Hayes)

Pollards – ancient sentinels in an ever changing landscape

Richard Bakere,
GWT Reserves Officer

For thousands of years people have managed the trees in the environment around them.

Cutting the main trunk of a tree clean off (normally at around 6ft) and subsequently harvesting the regrowth is known as pollarding. This ancient practice has many benefits, primarily that the growth from the tree is not removed by grazing livestock. Traditionally these trees would have formed a reliable source of material for basket making, firewood, fish traps and for some trees (like sweet chestnut) food. There were and are many benefits of this mixed form of agriculture not least that there is no need for fencing and the quality and size of the harvested material is very predictable.

For centuries these pollards were assets that provided a valuable additional crop for the land owner. Modern life no longer has a demand for small diameter timber and pollards are less common than they once were. The pollards that remain can be of a great age as the cropping process has slowed their growth much like that of a bonsai tree.

With time, wildlife has taken hold of these great trunks and all their age-related features; the cracks, hollows and rot that form part of these mature trees, provide a world of opportunity for invertebrates, fungi, birds and mammals. These features would never exist in a young 'healthy' tree. So certainly from a wildlife point of view, the older these trees are the better. To prolong the life of these veterans, the pollarding must continue or the tree is likely to become top heavy and fall over or split apart.

The Gwent Levels is a stronghold for pollards as they lined the ditch and reed edges. Traditionally willow and black poplar were the preferred pollard species as their affinity



Pollarding

to water and high growth rate made them suited to the role, in this watery landscape.

So next time you see a truncated tree hanging on at the water's edge, consider what else might be benefitting from its presence.

- Otters may enlarge holes under lifted roots to form aholt
- Bats may roost in any voids within the tree or under loose bark
- In times of flood, small rodents like water voles, climb up their trunks to escape the flood waters
- Fungi benefit from the broad spectrum of conditions within the tree, particularly the saprophytes which rely on processing decaying organic matter
- Anything from an owl to a kingfisher may nest within the trunk, while higher up corvids may roost at night
- Invertebrates often thrive in and around these stable and long lived trees, often hosting vital parts of their varied lifecycles

Let's hope that continued maintenance and some new recruits to this stoic wooden regiment will see their presence continue for generations to come.

GWT Photography Competition 2015

Following the growing success of our annual competitions, GWT will hold another photography competition this summer. We're really looking forward to seeing what great entries come in this year!

Entries can only be received from 15th August 2015 to 31st August 2015 and should be sent to photocomp@gwentwildlife.org. Don't worry, we'll remind you of these dates again in the next issue of *Wild About Gwent* and there will be further reminders on our website and by email (remember – if you haven't received an eNewsletter from us recently, we don't have your email on file).

The competition is limited to one entry of one single photograph per person. There are only two categories – the under 16s and the 16s and over. The only other rule is that the photograph should have been taken in Gwent. It doesn't matter when but it should have a wildlife or Living Landscape theme. The short listed finalists will go on display at our 2015 Annual General Meeting in September where the overall winner in each category will be announced.

For more information and our full terms and conditions, please see our website at www.gwentwildlife.org.

my country

— MY WILD LIFE —

Josh 13, Springdale Farm Nature Reserve, Gwent

Josh has been lucky to grow up in this beautiful landscape. We're here to make sure his children can do the same.

Find your Wild Life. Join Gwent Wildlife Trust today at:
gwentwildlife.org/membership



GWT Annual Race for Wildlife 10K & 1K Fun Run

SOUTH WALES Argus **EASTMAN Newport** **Free Press**

Runners will take to the streets for GWT's third annual Race for Wildlife on Sunday 17th May 2015 raising as much money as they can for GWT.

The race begins at 10.30am at the Undy Athletic Football Ground and will loop through Redwick Village and past the historic Church of St Thomas. For runners wanting to reach their personal best, the fast and flat course has definite 'PB' potential. However, if you have never run a 10K before, this race is the perfect first time event. The race is open to all athletes, joggers, walkers and fundraisers age 15 and over.

And for those who fancy a more relaxed morning, there will also be a 1K Fun Run at Undy Athletic Football Club. Fancy dress is encouraged and there will be a prize for the best outfit and medals for all those who finish.

Both races begin at the Undy Athletic Football Club. Closing date for pre-entries is Friday 8th May 2015. To register, find out more about the race, or to volunteer as an event marshal for this exciting event, please visit our website at www.gwentwildlife.org/how-you-can-help/raceforwildlife2015 or call 01600 740600.

Race for Wildlife

SUNDAY 17th MAY 2015

@ Undy Athletic Football Club, The Causeway, Undy, NP26 3EW

10K Race starts 10.30am. Entry: £14 and £12 for UK Athletics members
1K Fun Run starts 10.45am. Entry: £5

For more information, please call 01600 740600 www.gwentwildlife.org

Sponsored by: SOUTH WALES Argus, MONMOUTHSHIRE countylife, Welsh Athletics LEADER'S CLUBS EAST OF A.C. 10-011

Free Press EASTMAN Newport

Checklist date for pre-entries: Friday 8th May 2015
Charity number: 342619

