



Wild Meadows

ISSUE 2 ❁ SPRING 2009

National Trust for Wales

Welsh Wild Plants for Landscape and Biodiversity...



Roy Woods

WE DEFINE Wild meadows as all sorts of grasslands full of wild flowers, with abundant insect life that provides a fundamental life-support system for birds and other wild animals. From boggy pastures, to riverside hay meadows, seaside marshes, flower-filled dunes and cliff-top grasslands, wild meadows are a vital part of the Welsh heritage of nature, landscape and traditional farming. The majority of the surviving examples in the Welsh countryside are widely scattered, tiny fields separated by large areas of intensively managed wildflower-poor grasslands or cultivated land. Many are attached to smallholdings or residential properties, and are not part of a commercial farm.

The Wild Meadows Initiative for Wales was set up by *Flora locale* and funded by the Countryside Council for Wales and the Esmée Fairburn Foundation. The initiative aims to promote the restoration, good management and appreciation of wildflower grasslands by working with farmers, landowners and conservation organisations in Wales. The initiative has a number of resources offering support to anyone restoring or re-creating a wild meadow.

...**ACROSS WALES** more and more people are looking for ways to incorporate Welsh wild plants into our lives and landscapes for biodiversity gain. The Seminar *Welsh Wild Plants for Landscape and Biodiversity* held in mid-Wales earlier this year, and a publication of the same name explores how this can be done. Companies and organisations have been using wild plants in road verge creation, quarry face restoration and in flood defence work, to create wildflower meadows around an outdoor theatre, and in restoration works following excavation for a gas pipeline. The *Flora locale* Wild Meadows Initiative is working to support individuals, companies and organisations that are interested in doing this type of work and to encourage planners to think about wild plants and valuable habitat areas during development work.

If you would like to learn more about how you could use wild plants, contact the project officer for a copy of the outcomes from the seminar, or a copy of the publication *Welsh Wild Plants for Landscape and Biodiversity*.



Wild Meadow Restoration Grant – final season!

LANDOWNERS in Wales are already making use of the wild meadow restoration grant available to assist in increasing diversity of wild flowers in their grasslands. It is not too late to apply for this grant if you are interested in restoring a meadow. The grant is available to landowners, including those who are ineligible for agri-environment agreements, towards the costs of contractors, seed harvesting and other operations.

This is the final year the grant will be available, for more information contact the project officer, Ivy Berkshire, as soon as possible. Restoration projects can take time to set up and it will not be long before work needs to be done this summer.

EDITORIAL



WELCOME to the second edition of the *Wild Meadows Newsletter*. Well what a year 2008 turned out to be! I carried out a large number of site visits during the summer. It was fascinating to meet landowners and see their meadows, some of them

making suitable donor sites for seed harvesting in the future, others looking for advice on restoration techniques and ways to increase the numbers of wild flowers. I attended some shows, and the training events across Wales that were well attended. The Wild Seed Meeting was held in mid-Wales at the end of September and was a good opportunity to share information and practical experiences of wild seed harvesting, sowing and creating meadows. I am looking forward to a busy summer for 2009, attending the new Training Events all over Wales, meeting more landowners and seeing more areas of wild meadows or potential sites. I am also looking forward to administering grant funds along with advice in order to assist the restoration of wild meadows. Lets all hope for some good periods of dry weather during the summer of 2009, so that hay crops can be made and some more wildflower seed can be harvested from existing meadows.

Ivy Berkshire

List of documents for spring 2009

- ☛ **Discover Wild Plants**; a document that looks at the difference between native wild plants and cultivated or imported varieties, and how we can enjoy having them in our lives.
- ☛ **Welsh Wild Plants for Landscape and Biodiversity**
- ☛ **Grazing Advisory Note**, (illustrated) good practice guidelines in using grazing animals to effectively manage wild meadows.
- ☛ **Paddocks for Ponies and Biodiversity**, an advisory note aimed at horse and pony owners who are interested in improving their land management for the benefit of both the animals they care for, and the biodiversity the area can support.
- ☛ **A water-resistant wildflower ID guide**, a useful water-resistant pocket-sized wildflower guide, displaying illustrations from the book *The Wildflower Key* by Francis Rose. This guide looks at some of the more common species you can find in meadows and green spaces, and gives some additional information on each species.

Publications already available through the Wild Meadows Initiative that you might find interesting and useful include:

Restoring Wildflower Grasslands in Wales. *Flora locale* Advisory Note. **Wild About Meadows. A manifesto for the wild meadows of Wales**. 2008. *Flora locale* and the Grasslands Trust. If you would like copies of any of the above publications, then please contact your Wild Meadows Project Officer or the *Flora locale* office.



Seed donor sites

IF YOU OWN an area of species-rich grassland and would be interested in donating seed to enhance other meadows then please get in touch with the Project Officer. The Wild Meadows Initiative is compiling a database of good-quality donor sites for suitable receptor sites as they become available. Likewise if you would like to increase the number of wild flowers and restore or create a meadow, get in touch as we could find a local donor site for you.



CCW

PRODUCTS FROM WILD MEADOWS

WE ALL KNOW that a well balanced diet, with plenty of fruit and vegetables is good for our health, but new research inspired by French rural communities and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), part of the Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) programme, has shown that a balanced and varied diet is beneficial to the health of the animals that graze on wild meadows. As well as helping to maintain biodiversity, cattle and sheep grazed on natural grasslands produce tastier and healthier meat.

Analysis into the nutritional value of the plants found in natural grasslands showed that these habitats provided grazing animals with a more varied diet than that of animals grazing improved grassland. It was thought that this richer diet in turn produced tastier meat. The analysis also showed

that the meat from animals grazed on these natural grasslands was better for us too. Lambs reared on wild meadows produced a meat with higher levels of the natural antioxidant, vitamin E, than meat from animals grazed on improved grassland. The meat also had higher levels of healthy



Carol Crater

fatty acids including the long chain omega-3 fatty acid, DHA, thought to play a key role in brain development and to protect against heart disease. Higher levels of the anti-carcinogenic compound, conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) were found in meat from lambs grazed on moorland and Longhorn cattle grazed on unimproved pastures than in control meat.

This evidence is positive for the increasing number of landowners across Wales who are thinking about how they can manage biodiversity and continue to graze their stock.

For more information on this research contact:

Professor Henry Buller (01392 263342, H.Buller@exeter.ac.uk)
ESRC Press Office: Kelly Barnett (01793 413032, 07826 874166 kelly.barnett@esrc.ac.uk)
Danielle Moore (01793 413122, danielle.moore@esrc.ac.uk)

WILD MEADOWS OF WALES TRAINING EVENTS

Following the success for the 2008 season, the feedback has been studied in detail and an exiting new programme for 2009 has been developed. The 2009 programme will see some different titles to events, all based around the good management and restoration of meadows as well as two events based on identification skills. Many of the training events link in with the new range of bilingual Advisory Notes being published this Spring. The events are free to attend in Wales and are supported by the Countryside Council for Wales and the Esmée Fairbairn foundation.

1. Grassland Restoration

Shared Earth Trust, Denmark Farm
**7 July, 9.30am–4.00pm,
Ceredigion**

The course will provide an introduction to grassland ecology and communities. The relationships between common types of grassland, management, and change will be reviewed, along with practical guidance on how to recognise, assess, record and manage different communities. The latter will focus on ways of changing and maintaining grassland to enhance biodiversity. About half the course will be outdoors and some basic guidance on the recognition of common grassland species in the field will be available. Tutor: Richard Williams, www.shared-earth-trust.org.uk

2. Identification of Wild Meadow Plants

Moelyci Environmental Centre
**30 June, 10.00am–3.30pm,
Gwynedd, North Wales**

Identification of wild flowers and other plants found in pastures and hay meadows of North Wales. This will be a largely outdoor event, introducing the practical skills needed for wild plant identification, how to be aware of indicator species and their role in monitoring the successful management and restoration of wild meadows. There will be the opportunity on this course to learn the Welsh names for the Wild Meadow plants. Tutor: John www.moelyci.org

3. Managing Paddocks for Ponies and Biodiversity

Frances Clayton/Flora locale
**22 May, 2.00–5.00pm,
Carmarthenshire**

An opportunity for horse and pony owners to learn how they can manage horse pasture more effectively to benefit of their horses, the landscape and the biodiversity of the site. This event will look at animal health issues, and techniques available to improve the species diversity of pasture.

4. An Introduction to Grassland Management

Grasslands Trust
29 July, 2.00–5.00pm, Carmel National Nature Reserve – Carmarthenshire

An introduction to grassland management, a walk around Carmel National Nature Reserve. This event is aimed at new and inexperienced grassland owners or managers who are interested in managing their land for biodiversity. Attendees will have the opportunity to see and understand grassland management at the reserve, and look at different types of grassland habitat.

5. Wild Meadows Identification

Richard Pryce
**6 July, 11.00am–4.00pm,
Carmarthenshire**

An introduction to the identification of wild flowers and other plants found in the lowland grasslands of South Wales. This will be an outdoor event concentrating on practical skills. The day is aimed at helping you to identify plants in the field, and how to be aware of indicator species and their role in monitoring the successful management and restoration of wild meadows. www.latchygors.co.uk

6. Conservation Management of Upland-fringe Meadows

Phoenix Ecology in association with the Elan Valley Trust*
Wednesday 1 July, 1.00–4.00pm, Elan Valley, Powys

An afternoon event led by grassland ecologist Mike Hayes focusing on issues and problems associated with managing species-rich grasslands in upland-fringe areas. The visit will be centred on a 5-ha suite of SSSI-designated herb-rich meadows at an altitude of 320m managed

by the Elan Valley Trust. This site features excellent examples of traditionally-managed hay-meadows particularly characteristic of the upland fringe of mid-Wales due to the presence of a rare assemblage of wildflower species. The main focus of the visit will be to observe and discuss the effects of some long-term research into the effects of applying different rates of manure and lime on trial plots. This CCW/Elan Valley-funded work is aiming to understand how to safely maintain the biodiversity value of meadows while also achieving acceptable levels of hay production.

*www.phoenixecology.co.uk

7. Wild Meadows Bug Walk

Bug Life
Saturday 30 May, 2.00–4.30pm, Monmouth

An opportunity to walk through a wild meadow, seeing and identifying what bugs are living there. Learn about what these creatures live on, why species rich grasslands are important for them, and how to manage areas of grassland to provide the best habitat for them to survive. This will be an afternoon event.

8. Grassland Restoration for New Owners and Managers

Alun Evans
**12 August, 2.00–5.00pm,
Mold, Flintshire**

A course aimed at people that are new to grassland management and restoration of wild meadows, interested in increasing the numbers of wild flowers on their site. This farm walk will cover practical solutions for restoration techniques, looking at the positives and the problems faced in such projects. There will be an opportunity to visit a nearby SSSI grassland.



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Flora locale seeks to restore wild plants and wild-plant communities to lands and landscapes across the UK, and by this means raise the biodiversity, environmental quality and enjoyment in town and countryside.

Flora locale is a charity registered in England and Wales (1071212) and in Scotland (SC039001) UK
Registered Company No. 3539595.
Directors: Richard Clarke (Chairman), David Burton, Donald MacIntyre, Dr Barbara Smith and Robert Sutcliffe.



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Supporting organisations include Buglife, Butterfly Conservation, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (Wales), The Grasslands Trust, The National Trust for Wales, PONT – the Welsh arm of the UK Grazing Animals Project and the Tir Gofal Farmers Association.



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