

Nature on your Doorstep

At the time of writing, the nation is in lockdown due to the outbreak of Covid 19 and strict social distancing measures are in place to prevent the spread of the disease. This precludes much of the routine work that many of you would normally be undertaking as the Spring gets underway.

With many of us isolated in our own homes and feeling the anxiety of recent developments, taking a moment to re-connect with the nature that you can see and hear from your own home can be a valuable de-stresser. In this edition, you will find reports on projects completed before the restrictions came into force. In place of the usual listing of events, you will find links to activities and surveys you can undertake from home. Hopefully, you will find them inspiring, or comforting, or both.

The Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership continues to operate and we welcome your ideas for practical actions that can be taken now (with movement restrictions in place) and in the future.

Best wishes to all.

Ant Rogers
Biodiversity Implementation Officer



Photo: Trevor Theobald

PEMBROKESHIRE NATURE PARTNERSHIP



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Dale Seagrass Project Underway

Seagrass Ocean Rescue recently undertook the first major seagrass restoration project in the UK off Dale by planting approximately 1.5 hectares of seagrass during 25th February – 3rd March. The project by Swansea University and funded by WWF and Sky Ocean Rescue will monitor the growth of the seeds and infill with further seeds as required this year to hopefully produce a 2-hectare meadow.



volunteers filling small hessian bags with sand and seeds ready for deployment
Photo: Sam Rees

Subtidal seagrass *Zostera marina* occurs naturally in the Milford Haven Waterway in sheltered areas of suitable seabed, including an existing tiny patch in Dale Bay, but it is a species that has suffered huge decline in the UK. The demonstration project hopes to show that native seagrass restoration is possible.

Seagrass habitat benefits marine wildlife, particularly juvenile fish, is good for water quality, and globally is a fantastic carbon sink (better than rainforests). Seagrass Ocean Rescue has worked via Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum and the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Officer to liaise closely with the local community and water users to identify an agreed area for planting.

Sue Burton

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CLA Cymru Join the Partnership

The Country Land and Business Association in Wales (CLA Cymru) recently re-committed to working together to help restore nature. The CLA Cymru not only represents farming interests, but also farm businesses which have diversified and developed additional business activities. This means that we represent the broadest possible range of economic players in the rural economy.

This member has created the first red kite rehabilitation centre – and the business is now a major attraction having made a huge contribution to the recovery of this raptor species.



Photo: CLA Cymru

Whilst we are perceived and engage as experts in agricultural issues, we also have knowledge and experience relating to the breadth of issues affecting rural businesses, including concerns with planning, investment and economic development, skills provision, connectivity, and physical infrastructure and housing.

In Wales, CLA Cymru's membership reaches nearly 3,000 rural businesses. Here we play a full and dynamic part in Government and stakeholder engagement. Part of a well-established UK-wide organisation, the CLA includes some 30,000 members.





Photo: CLA Cymru

A CLA member hosted the launch of the Welsh Government's initial consultation: Brexit & Our Land which initiated and formalised the debate about farmers and landowners being supported for delivery of public goods. In the shot, Rebecca Williams, former Director of the CLA with Minister Lesley Griffiths and her then Deputy, Hannah Blythyn.

CLA Cymru pride themselves on promoting sustainable and responsible farming methods, taking into account the rural populations' requirements for income, the responsibility to manage resources carefully while continuing to produce the products modern consumers demand, and the need to preserve our natural environment for future generations. We give advice to our members on how to achieve the best balance of these objectives while also achieving their personal goals. For example, in the picture below, the farmer, within a National Park and NVZ, does not plough and direct drills his arable crops. That his land did not flood recently vindicated his policy not to disturb the soil making it vulnerable to breakdown and run-off.



Photo: CLA Cymru

Land management and enhancement of nature are not mutually exclusive. Our members may be businesspeople, but they all have in common an affinity with the natural world, they tend to be generationally-focused, i.e.: looking to pass-on land in a better state to sons and daughters than they received it, while also considering their own present requirements for income and duty to produce food.

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Waxcap Training with Plantlife

Five intrepid fungi enthusiasts attended a training course in Pembrokeshire in the Autumn under the guidance and tuition of local expert, David Harries. The course was spread over 3 days, allowing participants the opportunity to visit several sites across the County and to gain experience in field identification of these fascinating species.



Persistent waxcap
Hygrocybe acutoconica
 Photo: Clare Flynn



Day 1 was held at Stackpole, where David gave an excellent introduction to grassland fungi and their habitats. Staff from the West Wales Biological Information Centre (WWBIC) also attended with a presentation on biological recording and an introduction to the LERC Wales recording app. In the afternoon, Paul Culyer from NRW led a foray onto the Stackpole estate where several species were recoded including *Hygrocybe insipida* (Spangle waxcap) and a Big Blue Pinkgill.

Day 2 coincided with Halloween and we undertook a windy, damp, road trip of Lydstep Point and Pembrokeshire churchyards – a great day, fantastically organised by David and very much enjoyed by all. A variety of species were identified in the field using the British Mycological Waxcap key including *Hygrocybe aurantiosplendens*, a bright orange Waxcap spotted in the grounds of Bethesda Chapel near Tenby.



Looking for waxcaps in a Cemetery

Photo: Clare Flynn

Our final day was hosted by David and his wife Holly at their beautiful Somerton Farm. Participants were introduced to the molecular aspects of species identification with a tour of David's DNA lab and an introduction to microscope examination of specimens.

All of the participants will now be supported to carry on recording fungi and identify new grassland fungi sites over the coming years. We will

also be running more courses across Wales next year. This is critical to our understanding of these species and their habitat requirements and ultimately their conservation in Wales.

This training was facilitated by Plantlife as part of the Welsh Government funded partnership project, Magnificent Meadows Cymru.

Clare Flynn
Outreach Officer, Magnificent Meadows Cymru



EcoDewi: Aiming to Make St. David's Peninsula Even Greener!

A new community group has formed in the St. David's Peninsula that is committed to helping communities and individuals with locally-owned sustainable energy opportunities, as well as ecology and environmental improvement projects. The group, **EcoDewi**, is following in the footsteps of the St. David's Eco City Group, which has had great success with projects over the years, and some key members have joined EcoDewi's planning committee.

EcoDewi is supported by the LEAF (Local Energy Action Force) project in Pembrokeshire, an innovative pilot project from Community Energy Pembrokeshire, to help communities generate and share sustainable energy.

Local volunteers have taken on key roles and now they're seeking community supporters throughout the peninsula with an interest in local energy production and wider ecology and conservation projects to get involved. They already have a roadmap of potential projects including a small solar array project in partnership with a local landowner.



SWEPT Update



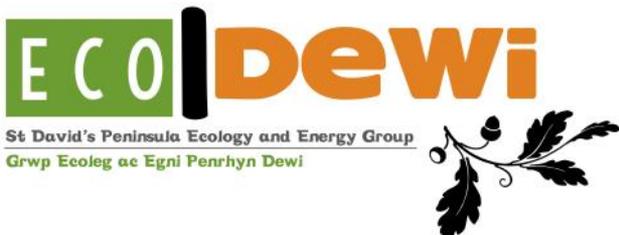
Photo: Jeremy Wadia

The group ran their first 'Talks & Networking' evening on Thursday 5th March at 7pm in The Meadow cafe, St. David's, with two guest speakers and an update on EcoDewi's aspirations. The evening's speakers were Ant Rogers, the Biodiversity Implementation Officer for the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership, and Tom Latter of Transition Bro Gwaun, part of the UK's Transition network, based in Fishguard. EcoDewi aims to run these 'Talks & Networking' events quarterly, so that locals and visitors can learn about different aspects of environmental work taking place in Pembrokeshire and share innovative ideas that could be adopted across the peninsula. Future events are also planned to take place in Solva and Llanhrian too, and details about all activities can be found on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as well as on their website <http://ecodewi.org.uk>.

Jeremy Wadia

EcoDewi

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This time last year the Surveying the Waterway for Environmental Pollution Threats (SWEPT) volunteer project (2018 -2019) had just completed its fieldwork. The project recruited, organised, and trained citizen scientists to collect environmental data within the Milford Haven Waterway. Around 150 volunteers spent over 1,700 hours inputting to the project and recorded a multitude of freshwater inputs to the waterway (350 during the wettest month) and carried out just under 900 water tests on some of these for nitrate and phosphate pollution. Had they been sampling recently, during the wettest February on record, the volunteers may have recorded even more inputs to the waterway!



Photo: Sue Burton

Land run-off has implications for water quality and wildlife within the Milford Haven Waterway.

Details about SWEPT were included in last year's summer newsletter. Shortly afterwards, the project won a national award from the Campaign for National Parks. Project coordinator, Sue Burton, and Anne Bunker and Simon Shorten from Natural Resources Wales were delighted to receive the award at a parliamentary reception on July 10th at the House of Commons.



*Nitrates from land run-off promote excessive algal growth leading to mats of green weed that can smother saltmarsh species such as *Salicornia* (Marsh Samphire or Glasswort).*



Algal mat at Garron Pill.
Photo: Sue Burton

Survey results are being used to supplement NRW monitoring data and better understand the effects of land run off upon the marine environment, and to lead to environmental improvements. A sharing event for land managers and the agriculture industry was planned for 25th March but was postponed due to Covid 19 restrictions

SWEPT has been a partnership project funded by a grant from Natural Resources Wales (NRW).

SWEPT

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Winter Works with the Wildlife Trust in Pembrokeshire

Despite the inclement weather, Winter saw much activity on a number of Wildlife Trust reserves within the county. It is the time of year, outside the breeding season, where work can be undertaken with generally the least impact upon wildlife.

The Wildlife Trust has been fortunate to receive funding through the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership to undertake work at Llangloffan Fen and at Teifi Marshes nature reserves.

An area of open water at Llangloffan Fen has been de-silted and areas of the invasive horsetail plant removed. This has improved the aquatic habitat for a variety of species including invertebrates such as dragonflies and damselflies, amphibians, wetland birds such as the kingfisher and rare aquatic plants such as pillwort. Due to much rain and high water levels on the reserve, it didn't take long for the pool to fill and bird species such as water rail, coot and moorhen were soon seen using the water. Otter has also been reported within the pool.



Open water work at Llangloffan Fen
Photo: Nathan Walton

Fencing projects have allowed better management of marshland habitat for conservation at Teifi Marshes, with water buffalo now able to graze areas of the reserve previously left to the encroachment of scrubby species. Water buffalo like nothing better than wallowing, thus creating depressions and ponds which are a perfect habitat for invertebrates such as damselflies and dragonflies, amphibians such as toads and newts and also for bird life. These species in turn help feed the reserve's population of otters, as well as herons and egrets. Grazing with water buffalo can maintain the diverse and low height vegetation structure of wet meadows. On marshy areas, trampling of vegetation also creates channels which can be used for dispersal by fish into



reedbeds. On reedbeds, they help achieve a variety of habitats, from dense common reed (*Phragmites australis*) to open channels. These open channels might also provide suitable bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) foraging habitat. The buffalo prove adept at using their long, sweeping horns to tear out brambles to reach places where horses and other animals would not venture.

Fencing at Teifi Marshes
Photo: Nathan Walton



Other winter projects have included the annual cutting of firebreaks and scrub on Dowrog Common (part funded by the Pembrokeshire Wildfire Group); woodland thinning works at Pengelli Forest; ash dieback felling works at West Williamston, Westfield Pill, Teifi Marshes and Pengelli Forest; and the refurbishment of a large leaking pond at Teifi Marshes. This revamped pond is located in front of the Welsh Wildlife Centre and will be used for engaging with the general public through pond dipping events.

Nathan Walton
 Wildlife Trust Officer, Pembrokeshire



New Home for Shelduck

Work was recently completed at the Valero refinery to provide Shelduck nesting opportunities. Shelducks are seen on Angle bay and have nested in the past in rabbit burrows in the surrounding farmland. Annual boat monitoring carried out by Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group (MHWESG) has shown a steady decline in breeding numbers over the years.

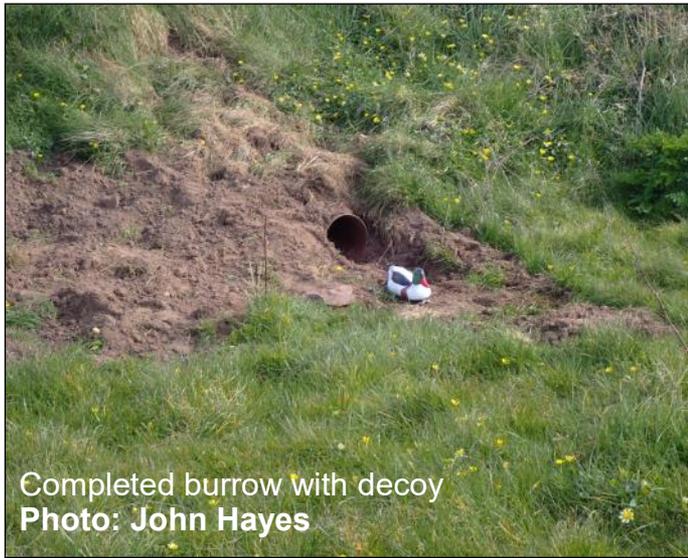
Working with Biodiversity solutions and Pembrokeshire Bird Ringing Group, contractors used funding from the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership to purchase materials to construct 10 nesting tunnels and site them in the banks of the old bunds at Kilpaison to try to encourage the Shelducks to breed in an area free from public disturbance and heavy agriculture. The area is adjacent to Angle Bay estuary (which is designated as SSSI) and Pembs Marine SAC. Six nests were constructed before the Covid 19 restrictions came into force.

Burrow under construction
Photo: John Hayes



In addition, sections of chain-link fencing were replaced with pig netting to allow free passage of shelduck adults and ducklings from the nest chambers to the estuary (100-200 metres away).





Completed burrow with decoy
Photo: John Hayes

The site will be maintained by Valero and monitored by the Bird Ringing Group.

Ant Rogers
Biodiversity Implementation Officer

Habitat Creation at the Slash Pond

This project was developed in association with a local community group (Support the Boardwalk Gang) by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority to increase the habitat diversity of an area of reedbed known as the Slash Ponds, in Broad Haven. The project was delivered by Chris Taylor (South Area Ranger) using funding from the Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership.

The aim was to clear an area of reed which was suffering encroachment from scrub vegetation (brambles, nettles), then dig 1x10m² wader scrape (shallow pool no more than 12cm deep) in the cleared area. Tools were purchased to facilitate this work and the ongoing management of vegetation by volunteers.



Volunteers before starting the dig at the slash pond
Photo: Chris Taylor





Slash pond after the dig
Photo: Chris Taylor

Work took place in January and February. Material excavated from the wader scrapes was used to create banks, which should provide a range of habitats for reptiles and amphibians.

The new habitats created were totally lacking prior to the work. The project built ecosystem resilience and strengthened each component habitat by creating a wetland mosaic (scrub, reedbed, wet grassland, marsh, standing water and running water).

After completion, a management plan will be

drawn up between PCNPA, Support the Boardwalk and the private landowner. Suggested management options will include pre and post-season monitoring to assess rate of regrowth. Data will be collected on species present, types of habitat and habitat area to assess overall condition. Breeding Bird Surveys will be conducted if possible during May – July to look for signs of breeding activity, notably of Reed Warbler.

Chris Taylor
PCNPA



Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park



New wader scrape
Photo: Chris Taylor



Biodiversity Events Spring 2020



Title	Information	Link
<p>The most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home. Please adhere to the message from the Government, and therefore only observe and record animals and plants in your garden or which you can see from your window.</p>		
Common or Garden Survey	A project to record six common species that you may see in your gardens and around West Wales. Our common species are often our most under recorded species. For example, the common toad only has 396 records reported in the past ten years. We need your help to record our underappreciated species!	https://www.wwbic.org.uk/wildlife-recording/common-or-garden-sightings/
Garden Birdwatch	Stay connected to nature, learn about your garden wildlife and contribute to important scientific research without leaving your home. We're giving everyone free access to BTO Garden BirdWatch during the COVID-19 lockdown.	https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw
Snakes in Gardens	Many people are delighted to spot a snake in their garden - it's a rare wildlife treat. We recognise that it can be alarming for some, however. Please be assured that there is no reason to worry. The vast majority of snakes that turn up in gardens are entirely harmless to people and pets. To help with identification take look at the photo galleries on our snakes information pages .	https://www.arc-trust.org/snakes-in-gardens
Dragons in your Garden	Dragons in your Garden encourages gardeners to take simple steps to help out the UK's frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards - many of which are disappearing from the wider countryside. Find out what you can do in your own backyard...	https://www.arc-trust.org/dragons-in-your-garden
Bumblebee ID Guide	Did you know that by identifying bumblebee species you can help us to conserve them? You can do this by adding your bumblebee sightings to the online wildlife recording survey iRecord	https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/bumblebee-species-guide/



Biodiversity Events Spring 2020



Title	Information	Link
Garden Butterfly Survey	The Garden Butterfly Survey allows you to record and report the butterflies that visit your garden over the course of a year. Create a free account, submit your sightings and help us learn more about how butterflies are faring in UK gardens.	https://gardenbutterflysurvey.org/
Every Flower Counts	By taking part in this brand new citizen science action , we will show you how much nectar the flowers in your lawn are producing.	https://www.plantlife.org.uk/everyflowercounts/
Activities for kids and families	We know that nature is good for us, but it can be hard to know how to connect with wildlife at home.	https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/kids-and-families



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Pembrokeshire Nature Partnership website:

<https://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/biodiversity>

Wales Biodiversity website:

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk

Nature Newsletters

Mae'r cylch-lythyr hwn ar gael yng Nghymraeg, cysylltwch â Ant am gopi cymraeg.

PNP would like to thank all those who contributed to this newsletter. If you would like to write an article for the next newsletter please contact Ant.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author of the article and may not represent the position of the wider Partnership or its constituent members.

PNP Members

amphibian and reptile conservation  **gwarchod amffibiaid ac ymlusgiaid**

bluestone national park resort  **Bumblebee Conservation Trust**  

CLA CYMRU  **Darwin centre**  **FUW UNDEB AMAETHWYR CYMRU** **Friends of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park**  **Ffrindiau Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro** **cadwch keep gymru'n wales daclus tidy**

Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales  **Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol National Trust** **PAVS**  **Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro Pembrokeshire Coast National Park** 

PLANED **Plantlife**  **SEA TRUST WALES** **TIR COED**

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