

Bluestone Resort Join the Partnership

Bluestone National Park Resort has recently become the latest member of the Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership. The resort sits partly within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and covers some 500 acres of woodland, grassland and freshwater habitats.

Ged Davies, the Resort's Sustainability Manager said 'We're currently reviewing our species and habitat management plan to try to ensure that the wildlife of the site which is so important to us and our visitors is protected and enhanced for the future'.

The Partnership looks forward to working closely with Bluestone to ensure the best outcomes for people and wildlife at the site.

If you own or manage land and would like to get involved with nature conservation work, please do get in touch with the partnership!

bluestone
national park resort

Ant Rogers
Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership

Scaly Crickets at Marloes Sands

The scaly cricket (*Pseudomogoplistes vicentae*) is amongst the rarest and least well studied of the U.K.'s Orthoptera (grasshoppers and crickets). It is highly unusual for a cricket in that it lives on

PEMBROKESHIRE BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP



PARTNERIAETH BIOAMRWYIAETH SIR BENFRO

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beaches amongst shingle and under larger stones. The scaly cricket is currently known from only four localities in the U.K., two of which (Marloes Sands and Dale bay) are in Pembrokeshire.

I have been studying this enigmatic species at Marloes Sands over the last three years. I began by gathering data on the life cycle, about which relatively little was known. This entailed visiting Marloes Sands in each season to assess the life cycle stages present, combined with rearing individuals in the laboratory, from eggs to adult, at the University of Derby. The results so far indicate that a scaly cricket has to survive two winters during its life time in order to reach adulthood. The eggs, which are laid in the summer, take a whole year to hatch. The resulting nymphs are only half-grown by the start of the next winter and become adult during the following summer. Some females can even survive a third winter as adults.

Surviving winter in a habitat of shifting shingle is quite a feat. I first visited the Marloes Sands site in the spring following the severe storm surges of



winter 2013/14, which caused extensive damage all along the Welsh coast. I was sceptical about whether I would find any scaly crickets at all and, for the first half an hour of searching, had no success. I was about to give up when my son, Gabriel (who was seven at the time) announced that he had just found three under one stone! The crickets had survived. Further searches in the immediate vicinity revealed a very healthy population. After making repeated visits to the same spot over the following two years, however, I noticed a dramatic decline in the population inhabiting that particular bank of cobbles. This was most notable following the frequent storms of winter 2015/16. The bank of cobbles had been completely re-modelled and flattened out and I could find very few crickets.

This prompted me to conduct a more



Scaly Cricket
Photo: Alex Hyde



extensive survey of scaly crickets, encompassing the whole length of Marloes Sands beach in August 2016. My task of surveying Marloes Sands beach was made relatively easy by the existence of an excellent report by Jon Hudson of NRW, in which the results of his thorough survey of scaly cricket habitats and populations along the beach in 2006 were presented. Using a GPS device, I was able to locate the scaly cricket sampling points provided in Jon's report and to repeat his surveying methods as closely as possible. This entailed using a series of 15 minute hand searches, in which I literally attempted to leave no stone un-turned, and using pitfall traps (plastic pint glasses, baited with cat biscuits and buried up to the rim in the shingle). The latter were covered by a large stone on four smaller supports and left overnight. The results, which I plan to publish together with surveys of the other scaly cricket sites in the UK, show that a healthy population can still be found at Marloes Sands; the number of individuals found both by pitfall trapping and hand-searching in the current survey were comparable with those found by Jon Hudson ten years earlier.

The news, however, was not all good: the scaly crickets and their shingle habitat have all but disappeared from a very large section of their former range along the eastern end of the beach. Comparing photographs of the scaly cricket habitat along that stretch of beach taken by Jon in 2006 with those taken this year, the dramatic

loss of shingle and cobble banks at the base of the cliff is very evident. This means that the main population at Marloes Sands is now restricted to a stretch of beach only about 200 metres long. I am still optimistic about the long term survival of the scaly cricket, however. It is clearly well adapted to its somewhat severe habitat. While studying its life cycle, I observed that females prefer to lay their eggs in driftwood. This raises the intriguing possibility that overwintering eggs might be able to survive winter storms by "rafting". Furthermore, it may well be that the species is under-recorded in Pembrokeshire and the rest of the U.K. After all, the population at Marloes Sands was only discovered in 1999. Surveys of other suitable locations around the Pembrokeshire coast might well yield new records.

Prof. Karim Vahed
University of Derby



WWBIC Celebrates 10 Years!

This year, West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC) is celebrating 10 years as an operational Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC). In that time, the species database has grown to just over 2 million records



and we have carried out over one thousand data enquiries. Project work has ranged from data mobilisation to more complex GIS modelling and our support for the recording community ranges from an annual recorders forum to recording days and training opportunities.

We are indebted to the regional network of volunteer recorders who share their species records with us, and in particular, the efforts of County recorders whose dedication and attention to detail underpins everything we do. Similarly, we wouldn't be here without the support of partner organisations and we would like to thank our funding partners for their continued support. These and many other people have contributed to the success of WWBIC, our dedicated staff past and present, our volunteers, and our Directors. We are grateful to everyone that has given and continues to give their time in whatever capacity.

During this time WWBIC has worked closely with the other three LERCs in Wales and together we share data on a merged database of around 9 million records, something unique in the UK. The data can be accessed by the public and our partners through another joint development, an online platform, Aderyn, which offers tailored ways of searching our data, yet another first for the UK. We look forward to supporting the recording community of West Wales over the next 10 years and will continue to look for innovative ways to ensure decision makers get the best possible value from our biodiversity data holdings.



A Recording Day

On Saturday 4th of March we will be holding our 10th Anniversary Recorders Forum. Come and join us for a series of interesting talks and displays and chat with like-minded folk over a complimentary lunch.

Colin Russell
WWBIC



National Park Helps Natural Resources Wales with Hay Meadow Management

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has helped Natural Resources Wales (NRW) turn over a new leaf as it works to transform some of the grassy areas around its



Llys Afon offices in Haverfordwest into a wildflower meadow. The grass surrounding the buildings used to be cut regularly and held little biodiversity interest, but the lawns were mown tightly for the final time last year and wildflower seeds were spread.

The area was allowed to grow over the summer of 2016, with bees and butterflies attracted to the wildflowers on show.

National Park Authority Wardens visited the site in October to cut and bale the first year's growth and kick-start the hay meadow management.



National Park Authority Chief Executive, Tegryn Jones said: “The Authority has been employing a similar scheme at its Llanion Park headquarters in Pembroke Dock since 2013, with a rich variety of pollinating insect and bird friendly plants and grasses growing, including cowslips, daisies, red clover, wild rose, and even an orchid.

“One of our main aims is to conserve the environment for future generations, and with the documented decline of pollinating insect friendly habitats in the UK, it’s important to develop sites with the potential for increasing biodiversity.”

Senior Conservation Officer for Natural Resources Wales, Mary Chadwick added: “We have been delighted with the progress made so far in transforming this grass-dominated lawn into a flower-rich meadow, to benefit pollinators and a whole range of wildlife.

“We are indebted to National Park Authority staff for cutting and baling the grass, which prepared the ground for sowing wildflower seed. We have sown seed collected from a local site including the semi-parasitic flower *yellow-rattle*, which helps suppress the dominance of grasses.

“Baling the grass removes nutrients from the system, which reduces the vigour of grasses and enables flowers to flourish. NRW would be happy to advise others regarding increasing biodiversity on areas of grassland around offices and industrial units.”

Medi George

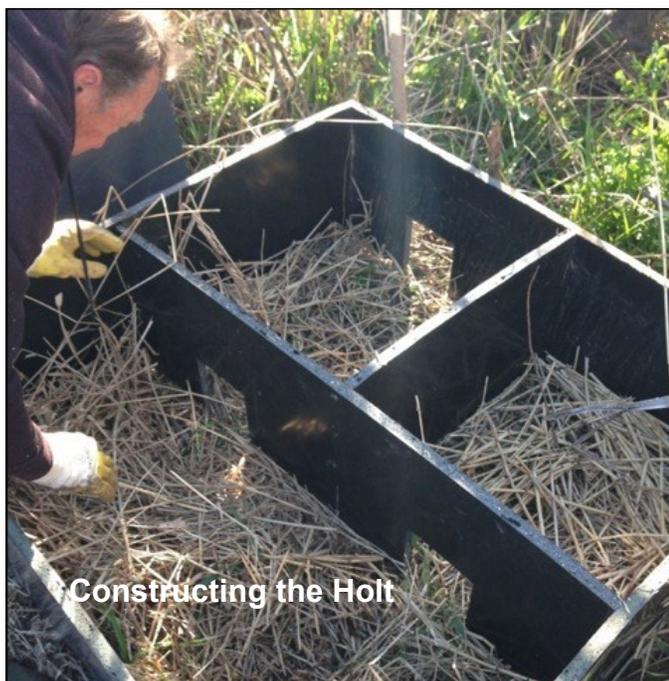
Pembrokeshire Coast
National Park Authority



Otters Make Themselves at Home

The recently installed artificial otter holt at Pembroke Upper Mill Pond nature reserve has already got tenants. The structure, which was funded through the Co-op Welsh Wildlife Heroes grant, was installed in April 2016 with the help of local Wildlife Trust volunteers and sits among an area of willow and alder carr on the edge of the reedbed and Pembroke river, that flows through the reserve.

A recent visit by Dave Levell, one of the reserve's keen volunteers, showed clear evidence of otter activity through tracks and markings leading in and out of the holt along with the identification of many spraints nearby. It is well known that the Pembroke Mill Pond complex has one of the largest urban populations of otter in Wales and that they frequent the Upper Mill Pond nature reserve on almost a daily basis.



Constructing the Holt



The Finished Holt

Nathan Walton, Wildlife Trust Officer for Pembrokeshire said, "it is great news to know that we now have otters residing on the reserve as opposed to just passing through. The reserve is free from public access which is key to providing good areas of undisturbed habitat and ideal conditions for otter. I am very pleased."

The otter is one of our most charismatic yet elusive mammals. It is mainly nocturnal and rather shy although good sightings can be made during the day in the Middle and Lower Mill Ponds. It is also one of conservation's success stories: following a catastrophic decline during the 1950s and 1960s, there are now healthy otter populations throughout most of Wales. This has been brought about by a ban on the most harmful pesticides, and the ongoing protection of their water-side habitats.

The otter is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is against the law to damage or destroy an otter breeding site or resting place (holt or couch), or to deliberately capture, kill, injure or disturb an otter.



In 2015 The Co-operative's Food businesses donated their 5p bag levy to support wildlife projects across Wales. The six Wildlife Trusts in Wales are using these funds to save our most endangered wildlife and wild places for future generations to enjoy.

Nathan Walton
Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales



Kew Lost and Found Visit

Pembrokeshire was recently visited by a team of mycologists who came to search for fungi and lichens that have been rarely recorded or are poorly understood. The visit was arranged as part of the Lost and Found Fungi project programme run by scientists at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and funded by the Esmée Fairburn Foundation.

The party from Kew comprised Paul Cannon, Martyn Ainsworth and Brian Douglas and was based at the Stackpole Centre - an ideal location for on-site recording on the National Nature Reserve.



Group Briefing

The programme was launched with a full day training and mentoring which was well supported by local fungus and lichen enthusiasts including members of the Plantlife Lichen Apprentice scheme. The event attracted participants from across Wales including Anita Daimond, the Waxcap Development Officer for the recently announced Plantlife “Waxcaps of Wales” project.



Hazel Gloves

Highlights of the visit included finds, at Stackpole, of *Entoloma bloxamii* (Big blue pinkgill), *Geoglossum atropurpureum* (Dark purple earthtongue) and *Hypocreopsis rhododendri* (Hazel gloves) all of which are species of conservation concern in the UK. Dave Levell completed the collection by bringing along one of the Lost and Found target species, the smut *Entyloma eryngii-maritimi*, on a piece of Sea Holly from Freshwater West - an excellent find.

David Harries
PFRN



European Funding Available for Environmental Projects

The Arwain Sir Benfro LEADER scheme aims to support new ideas which help to improve your community. LEADER funded projects should build on local strengths and opportunities. This could include better use of local and community natural resources, supporting community environmental initiatives, or developing rural craft skills, for example.

Further information about LEADER, which is part of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020, financed by the Welsh Government and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and Arwain Sir Benfro, can be found on <http://www.arwainsirbenfro.cymru>. If you have an idea you would like to discuss please contact Cris Tomos at **PLANED** on **01834 860965** leader@planed.org.uk

Some local environmental issues and aspirations, identified by Pembrokeshire communities as part of their recent action planning, have included: the need for more footpaths, cycle tracks and multi-user accessible routes; the development of allotments and community gardens; hedgerow maintenance; eradication of invasive non-native species; development of community orchards and woodlands and celebration of local produce.

Arwain Sir Benfro is gauging interest in re-establishing Pembrokeshire's

Valuing the Environment Network. This brings together community-led environmental groups to help them raise awareness of their activities and engage with new participants through talks, practical sessions and workshops that are designed to address some of the issues and aspirations outlined above.

If you are interested in finding out more about the network, please contact Karen Scott at **PLANED** on **01834 860965** karens@planed.org.uk

Karen Scott
PLANED



National Whale and Dolphin Watch

Each year, Sea Watch Foundation lead a UK-wide event to document the whales, dolphins and porpoises around the UK during a nine day period. Anyone can get involved and all are encouraged to do so! The full report will be out in early 2017. You can check out Sea Watch Foundation's social media and website to keep up to date with the news. In the



Short Beaked Common Dolphins



New Commons Registration Officer

Shwmae! My name is Jim Dunckley and I have recently taken up the post of Commons Registration Officer at Pembrokeshire County Council. My training and background however is very much in the field (excuse the pun!) of Conservation and I've had a passionate interest in our fantastic British countryside and wildlife from a very young age. I come to this job from a similar Commons Registration post in Ceredigion where I worked closely with landowners and key stakeholders with a conservation focus such as NRW, the Wildlife Trusts and occasionally independent conservation charities. More recently I have worked with PONT, who do excellent work facilitating conservation grazing on our commons.

At 8% of the land area of Wales, Common Land is also very much a key part of our Welsh heritage, and of course many of our commons are designated for their high conservation value. They often play host to fragile and unique habitats, and I very much look forward to working with and assisting the Partnership in whatever way I can in protecting and promoting our valuable common land and wider ecological heritage going forward.

Jim Dunckley
Commons
Registration
Officer



Report Highlights Park Authority's Success

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority successfully engaged with more than 6,000 hard-to-reach people and involved another 2,155 through its health-related activities during 2014-15, according to its latest Annual Improvement Report. The report, which was published by the Wales Audit Office in October, also noted that 94 per cent of sites the Authority manages were in 'good' or 'improving' ecological condition, with none of the sites reviewed considered to be failing.

The document also highlighted that the number of people using footpaths in 2014-15 was 30 per cent higher than the previous year, according to walking counters on the network of rights of way maintained by the Park Authority, including the Pembrokeshire Coast Path National Trail.

The percentage of the footpath network that was open and accessible was 85 per cent, a figure 30 per cent higher than the Wales estimated average and 12 per cent higher than the English National Park Authority average.

Medi George
Pembrokeshire Coast
National Park Authority



Biodiversity Events January—April



Date	Title	Information	Contact
28th—30th January	Big Garden Birdwatch	Count the wildlife that's counting on you with this annual survey from the RSPB. Download your pack here: https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch	RSPB
1st February 19:30	A talk on Polecats with Jenny Macphearson	Catholic Church Hall, Cardigan	Margaret Powell 1239 621512 margaretpowellcal@hotmail.com
13th February 19:30	A talk on Bumblebees with Sinead Lynch	Cashfield Community Centre, Haverfordwest	John Steer 01646 278966 biojohn@tiscali.co.uk
21st February 19:30	Pine Marten Recovery Programme	Join The South Pembrokeshire Group for a talk led by Dr Jenny Macpherson who will tell us all about the Pine Marten recover programme and her work at The Vincent Wildlife Trust. Foundry House Community Centre, Pembroke.	Christine 01646 673912 chrisjones58@gmail.com
4 th March	WWBIC 10 th Anniversary Recorders Forum.	Come and join us for a series of interesting talks and displays and chat with like-minded folk over a complimentary lunch	Colin Russell 01994 241468
21st March 19:30	Fungi in Pembrokeshire	Join The South Pembrokeshire Group who will be hosting a talk by David Harries about Fungi in Pembrokeshire and the habitats to find them in. Foundry House Community Centre, Pembroke.	Christine 01646 673912 chrisjones58@gmail.com
8th—11th April	Skomer Island Birdwatching Weekend	Join Dave Astins of West Coast Birdwatching as you spend three days searching for the best birds Skomer has to offer.	01656 724100 islands@welshwildlife.org
10th April 19:30	Fungi in Pembrokeshire	The Mid Pembrokeshire Group will host a talk on Fungi in Pembrokeshire led by David Harries, a County Fungi Recorder. Cashfield Community Centre, Haverfordwest	John Steer 01646 278966 biojohn@tiscali.co.uk



PBP Contact Details

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Pembrokeshire Biodiversity website:

www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk (search - biodiversity)

Wales Biodiversity website:

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk

Biodiversity Newsletters

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

PBP 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 it's constituent members.

PBP Members

Bluestone National
Park Resort



Pembrokeshire Rivers
Trust



County Landowners
Association



Pembrokeshire Coast National
Park Authority



Farmers Union of
Wales



Pembrokeshire Local Action Network
for Enterprise and Development



Farming and Wildlife
Advisory Group



Prince's Trust Cymru



Keep Wales Tidy



Royal Society for the
Protection of Birds



The National Trust



National Farmers
Union – Wales



The Wildlife Trust of
South and West Wales



Natural Resources Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Pembroke 21C Community
Association Limited



West Wales Biodiversity
Information Centre



Pembrokeshire County
Council

