



The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales

North Ceredigion Group

## Newsletter

May 2018

### 1. Chairperson's welcome

Spring is definitely my favourite season of the year with the lengthening days inviting evening walks, with a chance to marvel at the resilience of nature after such extreme weather during March. The plants have certainly been making up for lost time, which is producing some unusual floral combinations as some plants are very late whilst others are still on date. This year for the first time I can remember the oak and ash in our valley are breaking buds at the same time – based on the 'oak before the ash and we shall have a splash, ash before the oak and we are in for a soak' what summer weather does that predict?



*Pied flycatcher (see article on page 3).  
(Photo Mike Hayward)*

During the winter our reserves officer Em Foot was very busy collating the wildlife records for the 21 reserves in Ceredigion. These lists (mainly botanical) are available as Excel files to download from the WTSWW website. The idea is that you can check what you might see on each reserve and then update Em's records either if you see listed or previously unrecorded species.

Many of you are familiar with Chloe Griffith's enthusiastic Penparcau community project 'The Nature of our Village'. She has collated the results from numerous diverse species surveys to produce a comprehensive report. Interestingly this has caught the attention of politicians from Cardiff to Westminster as an example of the value and social importance of the natural environment. Well done Chloe, it's good to know Michael Gove has a snapshot of West Wales on his desk!

### 2. North Ceredigion Group programme of meetings for spring/summer 2018 (Ian Scott)

The final indoor meeting for this session will be the *Group AGM and Members Evening* on **Monday 14 May 2018** at 7 pm in Theatre C22, Hugh Owen Building, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth University. There will be a brief AGM followed by contributions from members. Everyone welcome.

#### North Ceredigion Group – local contacts

<b>Chairperson</b>	Fiona Corke	01970 822078	fic5@aber.ac.uk
<b>Secretary</b>	Dave Purdon	01970 871012	dwp_taicanol@hotmail.com

### 3. Aberystwyth Botanical Society meetings (Chloe Griffiths)

Forthcoming field meetings are as follows:

- **Sunday 6 May**, 10 am *Exploring the Woodland Trust Site at Coed Geufron* with Adam Thorogood. Venue: Grid ref. SN601801. See the Woodland Trust website for directions and information about the site at <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/wood/5299/coed-geufron/>. Directions from the Parc y Llyn/Morrisons roundabout in Aberystwyth are to head uphill over the river bridge and take the first turn on your left into the estate. Continue up this road (Heol Tyn-y-fron) and eventually take the left-hand fork on to Gwel Afon. The woodland starts at the top of this road.
- **Saturday 9 June**, 10 am *Teifi Pools* with Andy Jones. Venue: Parking for 2-3 cars beside the minor road near Llyn Hir (Teifi Pools) SN791681 and for another few cars 150 m further on the roadside towards Llyn Egnant. Good populations of the internationally-rare Floating Water-plantain (*Luronium natans*) and Awlwort (*Subularia aquatica*), the only submerged aquatic member of the cabbage family in Britain; also populations of Common Quillwort (*Isoetes lacustris*) and perhaps its scarce relative Spring Quillwort (*I. echonospora*) - not to mention the possible hybrid *I. x hickeyi*.
- **Saturday 14 July**, 10 am *Tregaron Bog* with Red Liford. Venue: meet at the car park at grid ref: SN 69211 62534. Directions to the site at <https://www.first-nature.com/waleswildlife/sw-nnr-corscaron.php>
- At 1.30 pm on the same day Red will follow up with a *Dragonfly Walk* on Tregaron Bog. This will be a joint meeting with the British Dragonfly Society.
- **Sunday 22 July**, 10.30 am (note later start) – *The Meadows of Caeau Llety Cybi WT reserve* with Steve Chambers. Venue: meet at the car park of the Cilgwyn golf club. For directions and more information about the reserve, see: <https://www.welshwildlife.org/nature-reserve/caeau-llety-cybi-llangybi-ceredigion/>
- **Saturday 4 August**, 10 am to 4-5 pm *Cader Idris* with Margaret Howells and Gill and Peter Foulkes. Venue: Parking SH 69781 15271 (fee approx. £4). The aim is to explore the botanical interest of the pillow lavas, Llyn y Gafr and Llyn Cader on the north side of Cader. (If weather conditions are poor the area around Llyn Gwennan will be investigated.) This is a long walk with some difficult walking conditions. Strong boots and waterproof clothing will be required. As this is an all-day session you will need a packed lunch and a drink. For safety reasons, no dogs or children will be allowed and the leaders have restricted the number of participants to 10. Please contact Margaret Howells directly to book your place, on [mth@aber.ac.uk](mailto:mth@aber.ac.uk)
- **Saturday 15 September**, 10 am *Dyfi Saltmarsh* with Andy Jones. Venue: Afon Leri Boatyard SN 617931. This session will be run in association with the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland and will include a visit to the saltmarsh, ditches and sand-dune transition of the Dyfi Estuary. We will explore the range of *Salicornia* taxa, etc. and search for uncommon upper species such as *Atriplex patula*.
- **October** Fungi Walk with Gary Eason, date and venue to be confirmed.

For all the walks, please come prepared for the weather conditions. You may want to bring a snack and a drink. We encourage lift sharing, which is your own responsibility to make

safe. If you contact me with an offer of a lift or a request for one, I will pass it on to our members. For further details please contact: [aberystwythbotanicalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:aberystwythbotanicalsociety@gmail.com)

#### **4. Llanbadarn hedgehog survey (George Ryley)**

The Aberystwyth Hedgehog Group ran a series of surveys in the Llanbadarn area over the Easter period in an attempt to determine if a population of hedgehogs existed within the village, especially as there were recent records in the surrounding area. Eight one-metre tunnels were placed in locations that looked suitable for hedgehogs, which were usually in line with a hedgerow or fence as hedgehogs seem to like to walk up against something. Inside each tunnel were sheets of paper and ink pads with bait placed in the centre, so if a hedgehog walked in, it would step on to the ink pad to reach the food and walk back over the paper, leaving distinctive tracks that resemble human handprints. The tunnels were set using dried cat food as bait for five days but this failed to yield any hedgehogs as it



*The distinctive human-like print of a hedgehog obtained from one of the tunnels. The smaller dotted prints above it are from a mouse or shrew.  
(Photo George Ryley)*

appeared that the local cats had cottoned on to the source of food! So, the survey was extended for a further five days but this time using a hedgehog mix of sunflower seed, peanuts and mealworms. At first, only tiny mice and shrew prints were recovered, and as wonderful as they are to see, they weren't what we were after. On the penultimate day of surveying the area, the first hedgehog prints were finally found in a wildlife-friendly garden in Bryn Glas! They were quickly followed by fresh prints at the same site the following day.

These finds are another piece in the hedgehog population puzzle around Aberystwyth, and are important to see how the national decline of hedgehogs is being represented in the local area. If you want to know more about the hedgehogs of Aberystwyth then please contact the Aberystwyth Hedgehog Group on the Facebook group page or via email on [aberhedgehogs@gmail.com](mailto:aberhedgehogs@gmail.com), where tunnel kits are also available to rent or purchase. A special thank you to all who allowed us to set up tunnels on their property.

#### **5. New homes for pied flycatchers in Coed Simdde Lwyd (Naomi Davis)**

This winter our volunteers have been hard at work constructing new nest boxes to go up in woodlands around north Ceredigion. All of the wood used was sourced locally and we were also given a large amount of recycled plastic board. We are trialling a few experimental designs with the plastic to assess the longevity of the material and to investigate if we can prevent box-rot in the future by swapping from timber lids or backboards to recycled plastic - we'll just have to wait and see how it goes!

The bulk of boxes have found their new home in Coed Simdde Lwyd in the Rheidol valley. The reserve is dominated by ancient oak woodland and bursting at the seams in springtime

with the songs of wood warblers, chiffchaffs and redstarts. The habitat holds the secret to this site's success with breeding birds; the sessile oak canopy and diverse understorey of bilberry, moss and bramble provide an abundance of natural nest sites and a plethora of prey for our resident birds and spring visitors alike.

Unlike the majority of migrant nesters, pied flycatchers are one of the few that is happy to nest in a box with a small hole (28 mm to be exact). Last year half of our current boxes were occupied by pied flies with a large proportion producing successful broods of 6 or 7 chicks. Pied flycatchers arrive in early April from sub-Saharan Africa and after travelling thousands of miles these site-faithful birds may utilise the exact same nest box as in the year before!

Unfortunately, since the 1960s their numbers have fallen drastically and in 2016 they were added to the IUCN red list for species of conservation concern. However, the temperate rainforests and ancient woodlands of mid-west Wales are perfect for these birds and we're lucky to have breeding pairs in a number of our Wildlife Trust sites in Ceredigion, including Cwm Clettwr and Old Warren Hill. The total number of boxes in Coed Simdde Lwyd now stands at 40 and with a wider coverage over the site we're hoping for even better pied flycatcher success this year.



*Final preparations to some of the nest boxes being put up in Coed Simdde Lwyd.  
(Photo Willow Jade)*

### **6. The Nature of our Village: from choughs to chiffchaffs (Chloe Griffiths)**

This winter we have been delighting in the sheer diversity of bird life to be found in the fields, woodlands and rivers of our village. A fantastic update of the latest sightings in our county is provided by the Ceredigion Bird Blog (<http://ceredigionbirds33.blogspot.co.uk/>), which you can check to see which birds are around at any given moment. We have found this very useful for keeping an eye on winter wader populations and for the arrival of our migrant birds in the early spring. Local birds are so well observed that it seems as though they are spotted the very second they make landfall in Ceredigion!

Our project has benefitted enormously from local birders leading bird walks for us along the river Rheidol and along the path at the back of Tanybwllch beach from where one can also see flooded fields and saltmarsh. This rich variety of habitats has produced a good selection of sightings, from a lone mandarin duck male hanging out with his mallard friends, to 'cronking' ravens, peeping oystercatchers and the graceful curlews.



*Bird Walk on Tanybwllch Beach,  
Penparcau. (Photo Chloe Griffiths)*

Since Tony Cross' well-received talk on choughs for the Wildlife Trust earlier this year I have kept an eye out for them and have been delighted to see them and their red beaks busy feeding in the flooded fields. Number 5H has been a regular visitor!

Thanks to the Bird Blog we realised that wheatears were due to arrive in mid-March, and also chiffchaff, and we were delighted to hear that the first ones had been observed in Penparcau, and to see and hear a chiffchaff singing on 26 March at the ruins of the old Pant yr Allt farmhouse, half way up Pen Dinas.

We're looking forward to a busy spring and welcome anyone with an interest in wildlife to come along to a future session. If you would like to take part in any of our surveys

throughout the year, please get in touch via [chloe.griffiths.ecology@gmail.com](mailto:chloe.griffiths.ecology@gmail.com) or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/829779180427287/>.

Thanks to our funders, The Nineveh Charitable Trust and D'Oyly Carte.

### **7. Bird surveys on the Ceredigion reserves**

In the last newsletter we asked for volunteers to conduct surveys of the birds present in the local reserves. So far, in addition to more general enquiries, Emily Foot has received firm offers of surveys for Coed Simdde Lwyd, Old Warren Hill, Coed Penglanowen and Cors Ian. This leaves reserves without takers so if you are interested, please get in touch with Em ([e.foot@welshwildlife.org](mailto:e.foot@welshwildlife.org)). The intention is that these surveys will be carried out by individuals on dates of their choosing, rather than being organised group events like, for example, some of the botanical surveys. The aim is to produce complete lists of all bird species found on the reserve. This will require the observer to walk around the chosen reserve on four occasions through the year, recording all the species seen. Results will be entered into a database that will be available on the Trust website. Please see <https://www.welshwildlife.org/nature-reserves/information-on-ceredigion-nature-reserves/> for a full list of Wildlife Trust reserves in Ceredigion.

### **8. Emily Foot's update of work on the Ceredigion reserves: update April 2018**

The treepoppers have been used a lot again on the willow at **Rhos Pil Bach**. We've been tackling larger, multi-stemmed trees, which is more wrestling in the mud than popping! We've also cut back some of the larger willows around the meadow edge where they are encroaching and beginning to root! The treepoppers have also been used at **Rhos Glyn yr Helyg** to remove the blackthorn that was starting to take over the meadow and in the pond meadow at **Coed Maidie B Goddard** where the willows have been cut repeatedly (during

Another day in the mud ...



... tackling the willows at Rhos Pil Bach.  
(Photos Em Foot)

the meadow's biannual cut) but have continued to take over. At **Coed Maidie** we also had to clear fallen trees after the storms, block holes where the cows can get into the woodland and do a bit of path work where it is really muddy. We also braved one of the coldest days of the year to replace a gatepost and mend a fence.

We have resurfaced the parking layby for **Old Warren Hill** and **Coed Penganowen**. We scraped away all the mud and then spread a layer of stone over the area. Hopefully this means you can get out of the car without having to stand in a big puddle! Thanks to the local group for funding the materials. We also did a bit of thinning of damaged trees, mostly sycamores, in **Old Warren Hill**. Don't forget to go and see the wonderful bluebells this month!

A couple of days were spent tree clearing at **Cwm Clettwr** after 'the Beast from the East' and Storm Emma left their mark. There is still some work to be done by contractors that was too big for us to deal with. Luckily, even though a fairly large tree fell right across the bridge, only one handrail was damaged. The bridleway was less fortunate!

Thank you to all the volunteers that have helped get this work done.

Volunteer work parties are on Wednesdays and Thursdays. For more details, please contact Em on [e.foot@welshwildlife.org](mailto:e.foot@welshwildlife.org) or 07980 932 332.

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**Correction** In the last issue we mentioned that grass vetchling could be found beside the path that leads down to the Penderi Cliffs reserve. This has since been queried and it is now thought that what was seen was bitter vetchling (or perhaps meadow vetchling). Perhaps this uncertainty will encourage members to visit the reserve later in the summer to resolve this minor mystery?

*Newsletter editor*

Steve Cuttle ([sputcutte@btinternet.com](mailto:sputcutte@btinternet.com)), with thanks to all contributors to this issue.

**A note on data.** In order to be compliant with the new legislation on data handling we are letting you know that, if you have provided it, your email address is the only data that we hold on you and it will only be used to contact you concerning matters of interest to the Wildlife Trust. You may ask us to delete your email address at any time.