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Newsletter for Owners and Managers of Wildlife Sites

Protecting wildlife
close to home

Welcome

To the second issue of Bedfordshire's Wildlife Sites Newsletter. This newsletter has been made possible by the employment of Bedfordshire's first Wildlife Sites Officer. Some of you may have already met Laura Downton whose role is to provide free information and conservation advice to owners and managers of wildlife sites.

Churchyards it's a living thing

Grassland habitats within churchyards have become havens for wildlife following the extensive loss of lowland hay meadows. These were once rich in wildflowers, butterflies and insects largely due to the management which consisted of low intensity grazing and/or cutting. Since the Second World War this traditional management has been replaced by the widespread application of fertilisers and herbicides to increase production. Nowadays, churchyards can be the last remaining fragments of wildlife rich grasslands in a parish. If managed appropriately, churchyards can support a wealth of wildlife.

Recently churches have been set a wildlife target under the Diocesan Environmental Policy and, as a response, 'The Living Churchyard' project, which has operated in a number of counties over the years, is being promoted within St Albans Diocese



(covering Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire) by Judith Evans. The Wildlife Trust is working closely with Judith to promote this project which is aimed at helping churches manage their churchyards in a wildlife friendly way whilst being sensitive to the needs of all users, in particular to the primary function as a final resting place for the dead and a contemplative place for their friends and families.

For anyone interested in the project, an open churchyard event is being held at Whipsnade Churchyard at the end of June 2009, plus there will be a talk about churchyard lichen during spring 2009 (dates to be decided). If you would like to be kept informed about these and future events, please contact **Judith Evans**.

If you would like to know more about the project please contact **Judith Evans** or **Laura Downton** (see contacts page).

The Nude Ewe

making money for meadows

The *Nude Ewe* is selling knitting wool spun from a local flock of hebridean sheep, in a bid to make conservation grazing more economically viable for local graziers in Bedfordshire.

The sheep maintain grassland and heathland habitats by eating shrubs and other rough vegetation. Sheep must be shorn each year, which costs money and the fleeces often go to waste. The Nude Ewe project is attempting to turn this 'waste' fleece into a marketable product by spinning it into yarn to be sold. The proceeds from each sale then go back to the grazier, in this case the Wildlife Trust.

The pilot project has proven to be successful, and the same idea is being unravelled out to graziers across the county. Yarn from a local flock of Wensleydale and Beulah Speckled-face sheep will be available from early February 2009.

All the yarn is 100% pure wool. Yarn is available for £3.50/ 50g ball. Knitting kits – complete with pattern, needles and wool to make wrist warmers, hat, teddy bear and bag – are also available and make an interestingly different present. For more information contact **Heather Webb** or **Laura Downton** (see contacts page).

GrazeBeds

connects the demand for grazing to the need for grasslands to be grazed

GrazeBeds is a grazing database, which is website based and open to all landowners/land-managers and graziers in Bedfordshire.

The concept is to promote the use of grazing as the most appropriate management of grasslands by enabling land owners/managers to offer land for grazing and for people with animals to find suitable land by registering on the website for free.

The website also provides an information directory on, for example, vets and shearers. The publications page provides information on a number of grazing issues so why not have a look now.

The website has nearly 30 graziers and landowners registered and it is continuing to grow steadily all the time. Even if there is no suitable land or livestock registered on the website at present, keep checking the grazing register as new land and stock could be added at any time!

So far, there have been five successful matches between local land owners and graziers and as the website continues to grow this number will continue to rise.

For more information visit the website **www.grazebeds.org.uk** or contact **Laura Downton** (see contacts page).

Funding and help available

Funding

Environmental Stewardship (ES) is an agri-environmental schemes funded by Natural England. Farmers and other land managers in England receive payment for delivering effective environmental management on their land.

Environmental Stewardship has three elements:

Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) provides a straightforward approach to supporting the good stewardship of the countryside through simple and effective land management. It is open to all farmers and landowners.

Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) is the organic strand of ELS. It is geared to organic and organic/conventional mixed farming systems and is open to all farmers not receiving Organic Farming Scheme aid.

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) concentrates on the more complex types of management where land managers need advice and support and where agreements will be tailored to local circumstances. HLS applications will be assessed against specific local targets and agreements will be offered where they meet these targets and represent good value for money.

For more information contact Natural England Tel: 0300 060 1114 or Email: iss.cambridge@naturalengland.org.uk

Farm walks, workshops, and clinics

These free events are provided by Natural England's Land Management Advisory Service.

The service currently covers the following areas:

- Cross Compliance
- Environmental Stewardship
- Organic Conversion Information Service
- Environmentally sustainable land management

To find out more about the events near you contact **Clare Bains** of Natural England Tel: 01284 717590, Mob: 07775 701804, Email: clare.bains@naturalengland.org.uk

Practical Conservation Work

Are you a land owner/manager who would like practical conservation work – such as scrub removal, hedgelaying, coppicing – carried out on your land? Find out what the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) can do for you in Bedfordshire by contacting **Ed** (Email: e.green@btcv.org.uk) or **Ben** (Email: b.hammond@btcv.org.uk) Tel: 01234 327300.

Help for woodland owners

English Woodland Grant Scheme

For owners of woodland County Wildlife Sites, funding is available to help you with the stewardship of existing woodland from the planning and assessment stage through to improvement and management work. The English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) is the Forestry Commission's suite of grants designed to develop the co-ordinated delivery of public benefits from England's woodlands. The closing date for the EWGS for 2008/9 will be **28th Feb 2009**.

Ancient Woodland Restoration Grant

For owners of Ancient Woodland up to 80% of standard costs can be paid towards the protection and restoration of ancient woodlands within targeted parts of the region. These are centred in North Bedfordshire, Marston Vale and the Greensand Ridge. The closing date for the scheme in 2008/09 will be **28th Feb 2009**.

For further advice and assistance contact **Claire Wardle** of FWAG (see contacts page).

The Deer Initiative

Managing wild deer for the future

The Deer Initiative is a broad partnership of statutory, voluntary and private interests dedicated to ensuring the delivery of a sustainable well managed wild deer population in England and Wales.

Wild deer are increasing in number and range throughout the East of England. In many areas populations have already risen to a point where serious impacts are being caused to woodlands and arable crops. Road accidents involving deer have also increased.

Deer Initiative local staff can help:

- Provide deer awareness seminars
- Develop and promote best practice
- Provide deer management infrastructure
- Facilitate training
- Support venison marketing.

If you would like more information to discuss the specific issues with deer management or their impacts in your area please contact **David Hooton** East of England Deer Liaison Officer, Tel: 01942 890798, Email: eastern@thedeerinitiative.co.uk

Contacts

Laura Downton at the Wildlife Trust can provide:

- Support for owners and managers of wildlife sites.
- Free advice on grassland and heathland condition and how to manage them with wildlife in mind.
- Conservation grazing advice and help with finding a grazier for your grassland or land for your livestock.

Website: www.grazebeds.org.uk Tel: 01234 362776 or 07734 478449,

Email: laura.downton@wildlifebcnp.org

Claire Wardle at FWAG can provide:

- Advice on woodland condition and how to manage woodlands.
- Help with woodland grant applications.
- Provide a link to woodland services and information.
- Liaise between experienced individuals and groups to help organise co-operative working within your woods.

Tel: 01234 228191 or 07825 526802, Email: claire.wardle@bedscc.gov.uk

Matthew O'Brien at FWAG offers a range of services for farmers and landowners from Environmental Stewardship scheme applications to habitat creation, management plans to species advice. Tel: 01234 228062,

Email: matthew.obrien@bedscc.gov.uk

Judith Evans at the Living Churchyard Scheme (Tel: 01727 851748,

Email: environment@stalbans.anglican.org)

Heather Webb at the Nude Ewe (Tel: 01234 228063,

Email: Heather.Webb@bedscc.gov.uk) Website: www.bedslife.org.uk/nude-ewe

Bedfordshire and Luton Biological Records Centre based in Bedford, has been set up to gather, store and share information on Bedfordshire and Luton's wild species, habitats and protected sites. Tel: 01234 355435, Email: brmc@bedsbionet.org.uk
Website: www.bedsbionet.org.uk

We hope that you have found this newsletter useful and interesting. General comments and suggestions for future articles are very welcome. If you would prefer to receive future newsletters via email, then please contact **Laura Downton** at the above telephone number or email.

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Photos credited to Keith Balmer, Laura Downton, Rachel Pateman, Laura Watson, Iain Webb and A. Woodgate

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