



Montgomeryshire
Maldwyn

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Montgomeryshire

Wildlife

News

Summer 2021



Who are we?

Since 1982 **Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT)** has been the leading voluntary organisation promoting wildlife conservation in Montgomeryshire.

Our VISION:

An environment rich in wildlife for everyone

Our MISSION:

To rebuild biodiversity and engage people with their environment by being an active and influential wildlife champion.

Wildlife Trust Wales:

The five Trusts in Wales, supported by Wildlife Trusts Wales, have 25,000 members and manage 230 nature reserves covering more than 6,000 hectares of prime wildlife habitat.

The Wildlife Trusts:

There are 46 local Wildlife Trusts across the whole of the UK, the Isle of Man and Alderney. With 850,000 members and 2,300 nature reserves covering over 80,000 hectares. The Wildlife Trusts are the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to the conservation of all UK wildlife.

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Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust



@MontWildlife



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On The Cover

Long-eared Owl chick by Emyr Evans

Visitors and staff at the Dyfi Wildlife Centre couldn't quite believe their luck when they spotted this magnificent fellow at our Cors Dyfi reserve this summer. Rare to Wales, long-eared owls are usually elusive because they're totally nocturnal, so to be able to photograph one up-close was a special treat.

Chair's Overview

by **Tim McVey**

Over the last 18 months, we've been working on some of our most exciting projects ever. Plans had to be altered, delayed and refined – but the end result is a bigger and better Trust! We're proud to be an organisation both for the people of Montgomeryshire and for those who value the wildlife of this beautiful part of the world.



The Dyfi Wildlife Centre is an expression of all that's best about this amazing area. It's a magnificent building on a wonderful reserve in the lovely Dyfi Valley. Every detail tells a story about the environment and of local people, past and present. Technology is used to reveal the ospreys and their nest in detail never seen before, as well as to make the new visitor centre not just carbon neutral but carbon positive – it produces more energy from the sun and earth than it needs, so it exports the excess to the Grid. Meanwhile, our newly introduced beaver family is maintaining the reserve as nature intended – and are already doing their job brilliantly. As a result, this part of the Dyfi Biosphere shows exactly what we can achieve for nature and the community at the same time.

Our Wild Skills Wild Spaces project is a perfect example of what nature can do for people. Led by an enthusiastic new team, it aims to improve the wellbeing of those struggling with mental health through connecting them with the natural environment at many of our reserves. Perhaps one day some of the individuals helped by these ecotherapy sessions will go on to become ambassadors for wildlife and the Trust.

By 2030 The Wildlife Trusts aim to have 30% of land and sea managed for nature, one in four people taking action for nature, and to be part of the movement to achieve net zero carbon. Projects such as Wild Skills Wild Spaces and those happening at the Dyfi Wildlife Centre are important steps towards this ultimate aim. We at Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust are excited to be part of such a worthwhile aim, something not possible without your support.

On that note, have you been inspired by our work and would you like to get involved? We're on the lookout for new trustees to help us deliver our mission "to rebuild biodiversity and engage people with their environment by being an active and influential wildlife champion". If you'd like to find out more, have a look at our website (www.montwt.co.uk/volunteering-trustee) or get in touch – we'd love to hear from you.

Tim McVey
MWT Chair

**Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's 2021 AGM will be held on
Tuesday 9th November at 7pm.
Papers will be available on our website.**

**If you no longer wish to receive this magazine mailing please
contact info@montwt.co.uk or call 01938 555654 to unsubscribe.**

Reserves roundup

News and seasonal highlights at some of our wild sites



Common Lizard –
© Kevin Heywood



Glaslyn

Cors Dyfi

Apart from the famous ospreys (which should be around until early September), look out for dragonflies and damselflies and, as you stroll, keep your eyes peeled for lizards lounging in the sun on the edges of the boardwalk. Find out more about everything that's been going on at this reserve on pages 4 and 5.



Silver-washed Fritillary butterfly

Dolforwyn Woods

If Reserves Officer Rob Haigh has one late-summer recommendation, it's an early evening stroll through Dolforwyn Woods... "Summer's my favourite time to wander around this wood with my

family," smiles Rob. "Walk under the shade of the tree canopy to keep cool, look out for bees, hoverflies and butterflies, and don't forget to pack a picnic." This ancient hillside woodland near Abermule boasts a variety of different walking trails and is a haven for wildlife such as the Hazel Dormouse and Pied Flycatcher – but remember sensible footwear as it can be muddy even at this time of year.

Glaslyn

A late summer visit to our biggest nature reserve up in the Cambrian Mountains is hard to beat. At this time the Ling Heather is in flower, turning the reserve purple. Pick a clear day and enjoy breathtaking views from the viewpoint, or tuck into a sunset picnic lakeside and then bask in the glory of the galaxies above with a spot of stargazing.

Access via the track is for Trust members only; contact info@montwt.co.uk to get the code for the gate.

Llanmerewig Glebe

From the biggest to our smallest reserve, this single field - located between Newtown and Welshpool - is covered in pink flowers in August/September (exact timing varies year to year!). In some years, we've counted more than 1,500 blooms of now uncommon Autumn Crocus!



Autumn Crocus at Llanmerewig Glebe

Llanymynech Rocks

Stunning in late summer, this former limestone quarry straddling the border between Wales and England is now a haven for flora and fauna. Keep your eyes peeled for lizards and large orange butterflies – Dark Green Fritillary and Silver-washed Fritillary butterflies. And you may be lucky enough to spot a rare Hawksbeard Mining Bee, a new species for the reserve.



Llanymynech Rocks

Red House

Combine a visit to this wet meadow with a walk along the Montgomery Canal, seeing how many different butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies you can spot. Plus, keep an eye out for our new pond and lovely covered seating area, which will both be added to the reserve in August.

Roundton Hill

Whatever the time of year, a visit to Roundton Hill in Old Churchstoke will be rewarding. Another great reserve for butterflies, but also listen out for grasshoppers, as each species makes a different sound. Don't miss a hike to the hillfort's summit, either, for panoramic countryside vistas.

For further details on all our reserves, including how to find them, visit: www.montwt.co.uk/nature-reserves

Centre of excellence

With a brand new visitor centre and many new arrivals – both staff and wildlife – the Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve is enjoying a golden age



Visitors to the Dyfi Wildlife Centre near Machynlleth will enjoy a world-class experience as our new, cutting-edge 'carbon positive' building is now open.

Built using grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government, along with public donations, the stunning £1.1 million timber-clad structure is the flagship of our popular Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve, bringing existing facilities and new ones together under one roof.

"We carried out surveys and asked the public what they wanted from the centre, rather than just using a generic consultant," says Head of Dyfi Projects, Emyr Evans, who leads visitor engagement at the centre with Volunteer and Visitor Experience Officer Janine Pannett. "We incorporated the feedback into the design and so people feel a sense of ownership with the building because they had a say."

Videos and live feeds from the osprey nest can be watched in a high-tech viewing area with four screens and cinematic imagery, giving visitors an unparalleled peek at the avian action. And for those who want to make a day of it, Welsh food and drink, cooked to traditional recipes using local produce, is available from the café, 'Caffi Ty Maenan' and can be enjoyed inside or out.

Upstairs, meanwhile, a large open-plan space called the Galeri offers breathtaking vistas over the reserve, to the 360 Observatory and beyond. This area, along with a separate classroom, will be used to host art exhibitions, events, talks and education sessions. What's more, in time there'll even be a dedicated retro-style wildlife cinema.

With a 40Kw solar panel system on its south-facing roof, power wall electrical storage and ground-source heat pump, the building is carbon positive, producing far more energy than it needs – enough to power 10 homes for a year! Building materials

have come from nearby where possible, including wood from Esgairgeiliog forest three miles away and slate tiles from Llanberis. With recycled and repurposed materials also used to great effect, the building is a shining light of sustainability for Wales.

Just as the new centre showcases the rare and precious wildlife of the area, so too does it pay tribute to local heritage. It incorporates reclaimed pews and panelling from an old chapel in nearby Corris, art from Welsh creatives adorns the walls and a feature staircase, made by a local carpenter from oak and recycled copper, evokes the hull of a famous ship built on the Dyfi River in the 1800s. Interpretation also illustrates the Dyfi Valley's ship-building history, along with its coin-making, mining and weaving industries.

There's more work yet to be done – such as a striking 'penny floor' made from donated coins across the Galeri to represent the Dyfi River, its industrious past and wild present – and it's hoped the project, which started September 2019, will be finished in summer 2022.

www.dyfiospreyproject.com/dyfi-wildlife-centre

Welcome aboard!



Caroline de Carle
Visitor Reception Co-ordinator

I'm thrilled to work at this fabulous reserve. I first came to this area as a mature student at Aberystwyth University and never left, going on to work in people engagement for other wildlife conservation organisations before coming here. I'm lucky to meet and greet our lovely visitors, and help them with queries – and I get to see the looks on their faces when they see ospreys, often for the first time.

Animal magic

It's been one wild season at Cors Dyfi, with osprey chicks, beavers and even rare long-eared owls delighting visitors



Osprey chicks,
Dysynni and Ystwyth

OSPREYS

Another successful breeding season at the Dyfi Osprey Project has seen parents Idris and Telyn rear two healthy chicks, a boy and a girl. Named after local rivers, Dysynni and Ystwyth have fledged and been ringed, and it's hoped they'll return to the area next year to breed themselves. "It's great to see the project making a clear difference – osprey numbers are increasing," says Alex Chadwick, Community Events Officer.

Watch the osprey action live via our stream:
www.dyfiospreyproject.com/live-streaming



BEAVERS

After being introduced from Scotland this spring, our beaver family - Bedwen (Mum), Barti (Dad) and Berti (Son) - have settled in well. Trained beaver

volunteers assist with field observations, while we use trail and static cameras to monitor their comings and goings and amazing canal-building. The nocturnal mammals emerge just before sunset, feed and cut trees through the night, sit in their favourite spots to groom, and then head to bed just before dawn. "I love the unknown element," says Kim Williams, Community Projects Officer. "We just don't know what they'll do, so I'm sure there'll be surprises along the way." While visitors can only glimpse the enclosure from the boardwalk, nevertheless it's exciting these animal architects are beavering away at their important jobs: to further the peat bog's recovery and boost biodiversity. Dyfi Wildlife Centre has a five-year licence for the project from Natural Resources Wales and will continue to work closely with Alicia Leow-Dyke of the Welsh Beaver Project.

Look out for regular beaver updates on the [Dyfi Wildlife Centre Facebook page](#).

LONG-EARED OWLS

Dyfi Wildlife Centre staff and visitors have been treated to some very special sightings this season. Several long-eared owls, including at least one fledgling, were spotted at close enough quarters to be photographed, and could be heard food soliciting from their perch near the observatory. This beautiful and elusive species is not only extremely rare in Wales, it's also the most nocturnal owl in the UK, making it notoriously hard to see.



Photographs:
© MWT/Emyr Evans



Sarah Tack
People Engagement Officer

This role couldn't be more perfect as it combines my two big passions: people and wildlife. A former teacher, I've always loved working outside, and forest school trips were the highlight of my week. Originally from Machynlleth, I've lived in Canada, Oxford and London, only to return to my hometown last year. You'll usually find me at reception or at the Observatory – come say hello!



Nadine England
Catering and Retail Manager

I'm delighted to have joined the team, where my background in hospitality and event catering comes in handy with managing the kitchen, devising menus and making oodles of cakes! In my spare time I love to ride my horse Bamboozle or relax at home with my partner Mike and our rescue dog Ginny – but I'm relishing the chance to help the Dyfi Wildlife Centre develop and flourish.



GOING WILD FOR WELLBEING

A pioneering new project is set to boost people's mental wellbeing and help reconnect them with nature



After the events of the past 18 months, and its inevitable impact on people's wellbeing, there was never a more vital time to find new and innovative ways to help adults and young people struggling with their mental health.

The Wild Skills Wild Spaces (WSWS) project does just that. A partnership between Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT), NHS Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) and Cardiff Met University, WSWS is a trailblazing ecotherapy programme that incorporates a range of activities to improve health and wellbeing through reconnecting people with nature and the environment, while making a positive change for wildlife in their communities – methods found to reduce low level mental concerns in research by the Wildlife Trusts and Essex University.

"It's extremely exciting to be leading on such an innovative and timely project," says Frances Louise, WSWS Project Manager. "The effects of the last year on society have really highlighted a need to support people's mental wellbeing, whether it's anxiety, depression or social isolation. This programme hopes to empower participants to engage in practical activity that brings people and wildlife together, for improved health and wellbeing, now and into the future."

Funded by the Welsh Government, the ecotherapy sessions will be led by the fully trained WSWS team at some suitably inspiring MWT reserves, including Llyn Coed y Dinas and Severn Farm Pond in Welshpool, Dolforwyn Woods in Abermule and Pwll Penarth near Newtown. Newtown Community Garden, run by Cultivate, will also be used. Activities will include wildlife walks, bushcraft skills like fire lighting, growing projects where participants will get to harvest and cook their own food and many other exciting opportunities.

While this might sound similar to other 'nature for wellbeing' courses out there, WSWS is unique in several crucial ways. Firstly, the free, inclusive sessions are designed for people who wouldn't typically engage in outdoor activities and/or prescribed therapeutic interventions and allow individuals to go at their own pace. Next, the aim is for the WSWS team to enable participants to continue to meet and improve their wellbeing. Last, but by no means least, the project will yield a framework and standards which, if WSWS is successful, can be used as a template for other organisations elsewhere in Wales.

Wild Skills Wild Spaces was devised by MWT Head of Health and Wellbeing Carla Kenyon, who was inspired by Lancashire Wildlife Trust's 'My Place', a





hugely successful project that boosted mental health through its '5 ways to wellbeing', which are connecting with nature, being active, taking notice, learning and giving back.



"It's been a long time in the making but after five years' hard work, we're really pleased to have recruited a fabulous and very experienced team to deliver this fantastic Welsh Government flagship project," says Carla. "Working with Professor Diane Crone and her team at Cardiff Met Uni, we hope to provide standards, a framework and the evaluation needed to help influence social policy in Welsh Government."



Better still, if the pioneering project is as fruitful as MWT hope, it could pave the way for similar schemes to be rolled out across Wales, improving the mental health and wellbeing of the nation.

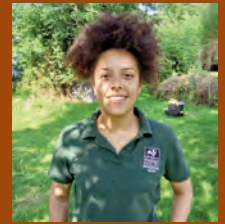
To find out more about Wild Skills Wild Spaces, visit www.montwt.co.uk/WSWS

4 top tips for connecting with nature

1. First, find a quiet spot outside where you can simply 'be' in nature – whether that's under a tree, next to a stream, on the beach, in your garden or at a local park.
2. Leave your phone at home so you have no distractions.
3. Tune in to your senses, what you can hear, see, smell and taste in the air, and notice what you're experiencing, from the shapes within nature to the sounds of birds and other animals.
4. Then ask yourself how it makes you feel and make a mental note – remember there's no right way to connect, it's just a feeling from within.

MEET THE TEAM

Frances Louise –
WSWS Project Manager



The role of WSWS Project Manager is a thrilling opportunity to help put nature at the heart of what we do for people's health and wellbeing. With a background in education and working with children and adults with disabilities and social and emotional needs, I also ran a forest school business with a holistic approach to learning outdoors. The Wild Skills Wild Spaces project will allow me to draw on my past experience, while also indulging in my love for the Mid Wales countryside where I grew up and still live today.



Mark Harding – *WSWS Youth Engagement Officer*

Having been a playworker for a children's charity and held bushcraft camps for schools, I'm very excited about my new role as WSWS Youth Engagement Officer.

Continuing the outdoor theme that's run through my life, it involves encouraging people to explore their connection with the wild world through outdoor activities, learn new skills and have fun. In my spare time I love to cook, eat, be out in nature and make music – I'm lucky to do most of that in my new role!

Eurig Joniver – *WSWS Community Reserves Officer*



A first language Welsh speaker, I'm originally from North Wales where I've spent most of my life. On moving to Mid Wales recently, I jumped at the chance to work as WSWS Community Reserves Officer. Whether it's identifying species or habitat management, I'll be helping out with the practical aspects of ecotherapy activities. With a degree in Marine Environmental Protection and background in conservation, I'm passionate about enabling the community to develop wild skills to restore, protect and enhance our wild spaces.



Jo Walker – *WSWS Trainee Community Officer*

I can't wait to get my teeth in to the role of Trainee Community Officer on the Wild Skills Wild Spaces project, combining my experience of working with people of all ages and backgrounds with my passion for green spaces. I'll be supporting a fantastic team in the delivery of ecotherapy sessions; it's been lovely to meet so many wonderful people already and learn new skills along the way. I've volunteered with numerous conservation organisations in recent years, so working for Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust is a dream come true.

Game on

Our latest climate change campaign, Stand for Nature Wales, hopes to inspire young people to become leading voices for nature and environmental revolution



As part of our Stand for Nature Wales campaign, Dan Hodgkiss and Fay Morris have been working with young people from The Game Change Project and local schools doing activities such as building blue tit boxes, pond dipping, minibeast hunts and insect hotel construction

If there was ever a hot topic for 2021, it's climate change. And our latest campaign on the subject, the groundbreaking Stand For Nature Wales, sees us working with all the other Welsh Wildlife Trusts to inspire and empower young people to protect nature and help combat climate change.

Led by Project Officer Dan Hodgkiss and Project Trainee Fay Morris, we've teamed up with The Game Change Project, a charity based outside Newtown which aims to provide opportunities to young people from all backgrounds to gain confidence and training, as well as life skills. Through Stand For Nature Wales, they've learned to build back for nature, capture carbon and connect with their green spaces. During the workshops, our groups have built bird boxes - and seen blue tits fledge from them! - dug out ponds and filled a brand-new bug hotel.

They've also explored a huge range of habitats on site through techniques such as pond-dipping and minibeast hunts, while mindfulness and bushcrafts such as fire safety and shelter building have provided a gentle springboard for those not yet used to the great outdoors.

We've been running similar sessions with youngsters at Abermule Primary School and have so far built a bug hotel, started work on a school meadow and run a minibeast hunt.

Arguably our greatest legacy, meanwhile, is our Climate Youth Forum. This group was built to support young people who wish to be representatives of their local areas, acting as a catalyst for environmental action. Until very recently, these meetings were entirely virtual, but the youngest portion of our youth forum met

face to face for the first time at the new Dyfi Wildlife Centre - an appropriate setting, if ever there was one, thanks to its green credentials - to catch insects, discuss future projects, sneak a peek at the ospreys and try in vain to look for beavers!

School may be out, but the work isn't over yet... Teaming up with Radnorshire Wildlife Trust, we'll be running events through August to inspire a few more 9-24 year olds to take part. These will include activities such as filmmaking, storytelling and art, plus practical wildlife activities to explore how we can best tackle the joint challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change.

For more information on our Stand for Nature Wales project and Youth Forum, including how you, or a young person you know, can get involved, visit www.montwt.co.uk/stand4nature

Volunteer update

We're so lucky at MWT to have such a loyal band of volunteers and while there have been restrictions on numbers this summer, they've been carrying out loads of vital work.

This has included helping Reserves Officer Rob Haigh with fencing and interpretation installation at Llanymynech Rocks and fence repairs and meadow management at Llandinam Gravels; and assisting Conservation Officer Tammy Stretton with dormouse surveys on

our nature reserves and site surveys and advisory visits around Montgomeryshire. Tasks are restricted over the summer months to avoid disturbing nesting birds and important habitat - but there'll be a broader range of jobs for volunteers to get stuck into come autumn.

As the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust office in Welshpool remains closed, our office and shop volunteers have been taking a break - but we look forward to

welcoming back old faces, as well as hopefully some new ones, as soon as we reopen.

Thank you, as always, to those who have volunteered over the last few months - we couldn't do it without you!

If you'd like to find out more about volunteering for MWT, contact our Membership and Volunteer Officer, Sandy Scott: vol@montwt.co.uk