



Montgomeryshire
Maldwyn

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Montgomeryshire

Wildlife News

Winter 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



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On The Cover

Fieldfare in winter by Richard Steel/2020VISION

If you're out and about in Montgomeryshire this winter, you might be lucky enough to see a Fieldfare. These beautiful thrushes are a winter visitor to Wales and can be spotted feasting on berry-laden bushes such as Rowan.

Chair's Overview

Habitats are not islands separated by impenetrable barriers. Rather, each blends into another, creating an infinite number of unique niches and relationships.

When we leave space for nature in the form of reserves, these spaces don't stand in isolation but rather they exist in relation to what surrounds them. Bees and birds fly in and out, fences seldom restrict animals and seeds blow about, ignoring artificial boundaries.

Our nature reserves provide havens for wildlife, somewhere fauna and flora can thrive safe from threats. However, we don't want nature restricted to the pockets we protect – we want to see our countryside flourish, our parks full of birds, our verges buzzing with insects, our woods full of all sorts of trees. Without this interplay, even nature reserves will shrivel for lack of life.

In fact, this has already been happening and wildlife has been on the decline even in protected areas. In order to reverse this worrying trend, we must respond on a landscape scale. We need to make networks across the county – and then across the entire country – for wildlife to spread and for species to mix. This network needs to be made up of a variety of habitats, not just the land unsuitable for farming or development, but also gardens, parks, meadows, woods, hedges, streams, peat bogs, salt marsh – and every other type of environment you can think of.

What's more, we can all participate in making links between these networks. As individuals we can leave wild spaces in our gardens, make a pond and plant nectar-rich flowers; and as communities we can join together to produce beautiful, fruitful, vigorous areas for wildlife to thrive. This is the idea at the heart of Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust's new project: Green Connections Powys (read more about it on pages 4 and 5). If this ethos inspires you to get involved, the project's passionate team can show you where to start, how to monitor the success of your efforts and how to turn your community into a link in an ever expanding network that will allow nature to thrive in Montgomeryshire once more.

Tim McVey
MWT Chair

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*Tim at Pumlumon,
in the Cambrian Mountains*



RESERVE IN FOCUS:

Llyn Coed y Dinas, Welshpool

This wildlife service station is a veritable avian winter wonderland

Just as we humans need to break up a long tiring journey with a rest and refuel, so too do our feathered friends. And one such wildlife service station is our Llyn Coed y Dinas Nature Reserve in Welshpool. Here bird numbers soar in the colder months as large gatherings of wildfowl – such as Canada and Greylag Geese, and ducks including Mallard, Wigeon and Teal – descend on the site for either a quick stop-off or to overwinter and breed.

While Llyn Coed y Dinas – or LCYD (pronounced ‘El Sid’), as it’s affectionately known – is one of the reserves we first acquired, it’s still a fledgling; it was only created in 1988 when aggregate was taken from the valley floor to build the Welshpool Relief Road (which opened in 1993). The gravel pit filled with water and the resulting ‘lake’, along with the surrounding land, was given to Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust.

An array of native species were planted – and over the years nature has reclaimed this manmade eight-hectare site. Today it attracts around 159 butterflies and moths and 151 bird species – amazing for somewhere a stone’s throw from a bustling highway. This diversity is thanks to its plethora of habitats, from shallow water for surface-feeding birds to deep water for divers, as well as reed beds, which are rare in Montgomeryshire.

Chris Townsend has been Volunteer Warden of LCYD since the start. He loves the reserve because

it’s different every single day and you never know what you might see.

“At this time of year, non-migratory and overwintering birds need to feed more intensively. Therefore they become more concentrated in food-rich areas, such as here,” explains Chris.

Rare and elusive creatures sometimes make an appearance too, such as Great White and Little Egrets, Short-eared Owls and Otters.

“We’ve even had Bittern (a bird the size of a Heron; pictured above, right) roosting here in winter, right in front of the bird hide,” adds Chris. “To be in there with lots of visitors and have a Bittern 20 feet away that no one can see until, as dusk falls, it pops up from out of the reeds – it’s the most wonderful wildlife experience.”

Accessible in (almost) all weathers, Llyn Coed y Dinas is the perfect winter destination for bird lovers. Come well wrapped up with a flask of tea and some binoculars and take a pew in the fantastic hide at the northern edge of the lake to watch nature’s theatre at its best.

- Follow this reserve on social media at [#LlynCoedyDinas](#); for more information about LCYD, including directions and facilities, or to find out about our other sites, visit www.montwt.co.uk/nature-reserves



Photos: © Chris Townsend



Photo (and photo bottom left): © Denme/Dolydd Gobaith

Clockwise from top left: Our Green Connections Powys team (from left to right) – Lottie Glover, Phoebe Neville-Evans, Ceri Jones and Tammy Stretton; local sites, such as Porth Farm and Dolydd Gobaith CIC, are working with us to discover their wildlife and do more for nature in the area

Let's Get Connected

Our new Living Landscapes project, Green Connections Powys, is all about bringing people together to take action and create a nature recovery network across the county

Everything in nature is connected, and we need to take a joined-up approach and think on a landscape scale to combat its decline and mitigate climate change.

This is the forward-thinking message at the heart of our exciting new project: Green Connections Powys. A collaborative campaign between Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust and our friends at Radnorshire Wildlife Trust and Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (Brecknock Office), we'll be working with individuals, community groups, small businesses, landowners and local councils to forge a nature recovery network across the entire county.

We'll be surveying and mapping flora and fauna, advising on habitat management and nature-based

solutions, helping people encourage more wildlife into their gardens and communities, as well as offering opportunities for volunteering and upskilling.

With increased public interest in wildlife and awareness of climate change since the pandemic, Conservation Officer Tammy Stretton, part of the Green Connections Powys team, feels there's never been a better time for such a scheme.

"For decades we've been fragmenting habitats and waging war on our countryside," she tells us. "In the past the conservation movement has grabbed hold of those last vestiges of wildlife-rich areas, and protected them as best they can. But the problem with this model is that they are islands in a sea of

desert – it hasn't stopped the decline in biodiversity, nor has it given nature the chance to adapt to climate change.

"We now understand the importance of nature recovery network projects, about trying to connect everywhere and bring wildlife into every facet of our daily lives," explains Tammy. "We need to make people realise nature is critical to our survival – it's our water supply, our air supply, our food supply – and that we can all make a difference."

The project, which will run until March 2023, will be flexible and reactive, responding to what communities want or need from it. With people engagement front and centre, there'll be talks and events, plus plenty of useful hands-on habitat work. This will include training on land-management tools, from centuries-old scythes to cutting-edge technology; and wildlife identification workshops to help people survey and then monitor species on their land. The team will also work with local councils and communities to manage green spaces, road verges and wildlife corridors, as well as specialist nurseries to reintroduce rare plants to suitable sites.

"Nature isn't rigid – every piece of grassland is different and there can be huge variety across one small green area, so there's no one-size-fits-all answer to how it should be managed," continues Tammy. "We want to enable and empower people with information and tools so they can take action and develop their own projects."

Tammy and Head of Living Landscapes, Ceri Jones, are joined by Green Connections Community Wildlife Officer Lottie Glover and Trainee Phoebe Neville-Evans. "It's wonderful to see so many people wanting to get involved to help wildlife," enthuses Lottie, "and I'm looking forward to delivering lots of training days and events."

5 top tips for making green connections in your garden

1. Be less tidy – raise mower height and mow less often, let hedges grow and cherish 'weeds'.
2. Don't use any chemicals as this will upset the natural balance.
3. Choose insect-friendly plants by visiting the garden centre on a sunny day and seeing what's abuzz with bees, butterflies and other flighty friends.
4. Add water, whether it's a tray, a container or a pond, big or small.
5. Include dead wood – part-bury a stump, make a log pile or simply leave old branches where they fall.

What does Green Connections Powys hope to achieve?

"In an ideal world we'd have all these wonderful green connections everywhere, running all over the landscape," says Tammy. "Even if a field was intensively managed, for example, you'd have a buffer zone around its edges with tons of wildflowers and sympathetically managed hedgerows. It's about looking for every single opportunity, from a tiny pot to a large piece of land, to help wildlife."

- **For further information about Green Connections Powys, visit www.montwt.co.uk/our-projects/green-connections-powys or email tammy@montwt.co.uk**

Welcome aboard!



Lottie Glover
Green Connections Community
Wildlife Officer

I'm excited to join the MWT team as the Green Connections Community Wildlife Officer. Since studying

Zoology at university, I've worked for organisations including WWF-UK and the RSPB, as I'm passionate about conservation. In my role, I'll be supporting communities, landowners, councils and businesses to take action for wildlife. Originally from Shropshire, I now live in Welshpool and love birdwatching, wild swimming and hiking in my spare time.



Phoebe Neville-Evans
Green Connections Trainee
Community Wildlife Officer

I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the work the Trusts are doing for nature recovery. I graduated

from Aberystwyth University last year with an FdSc in Countryside Management and Conservation and was then Woodland Project Officer for Radnorshire Wildlife Trust before joining MWT to work with local communities for nature. It's an amazing opportunity and will also give me the chance to explore Montgomeryshire's wonderful countryside.

A lasting legacy

Tammy Stretton, Conservation Officer, pays tribute to MWT member and moth champion, the talented Douglas Boyes, taken from us too soon

I don't know the exact date I first met Douglas, but he made an impression right away. As a teenager, his knowledge of moths was encyclopaedic, and I was in awe that one so young could already identify 2,500-plus species.

It was testament to Doug's passion and dedication that as soon as he became switched onto the subject, he threw himself into the world of moths, supported by his parents, Simon and Clare, as well as the Montgomeryshire Moth Recorder, Peter Williams. Clare drove Doug to every moth event, often staying until the early hours, whatever the weather. Driving lessons with Simon would involve motoring around all our reserves, just so Doug could record moths on each site. All this on top of near nightly moth trapping in their Middletown garden, which led to 800 species being recorded there alone.

Anyone who's come to one of our Bat and Moth Night events will likely have met Doug. He was always happy to share his knowledge with event-goers, inspiring many people into the world of moths in the process. In July 2013, Peter was laid low with a bad back, unable to co-lead one of these nights at Dolforwyn Woods with me. At just 16, Doug took

up the reins and had people captivated.

That same year Doug also became Vice County Butterfly Recorder for Montgomeryshire; the youngest person ever to hold such a position. By February 2014, he'd produced the first status report for butterflies in the county and would go on to receive the Newcomer Award in the 2020 National Biodiversity Network Awards for Wildlife Recording.

A dedicated wildlife conservationist, Doug wanted to inspire real change. After graduating from Oxford University in 2017 with a first-class honours degree in Biological Sciences, and then a Masters, his PhD investigated the impacts of street lighting on moths. Doug spent over 400 hours searching for caterpillars along roadsides – for three years! The hard work paid off, however, as it was the first real-world evidence that light pollution is reducing moth populations. The research was published earlier this year to be met with huge media interest around the world.

Studying aside, Doug was also involved with a plethora of pioneering scientific projects, taught butterfly and moth identification and



Douglas and one of his best-loved butterfly species, the Orange-tip



Photo: © Ian Lindsey

inspired countless wildlife lovers through his boundless passion and seemingly limitless knowledge.

I know many at MWT share my deep sense of loss, but Douglas lives on in our memories and leaves a very significant, long-lasting legacy – like ripples in a pond or, perhaps more appropriately, like the 'butterfly effect'. Our thoughts and best wishes are with the Boyes family.

- **Douglas' family have worked with Butterfly Conservation to set up a fund in his memory for young researchers. For more, visit: www.butterflyconservation.org**

Back to nature

Our exciting new ecotherapy programme, Wild Skills Wild Spaces (WSWS), may have only been running a little over six months but it's already received national recognition.

The pioneering nature for wellbeing project – a partnership with Powys Teaching Health Board and Cardiff Metropolitan University – has won a prestigious NHS Forest 2021 Award for Engaging People with Nature.

Incorporating outdoor activities, from wildlife walks to green woodworking, WSWS is designed to help people struggling with mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety. As well as boosting participants' wellbeing, the project enables them to make a positive change for wildlife in their communities.

The programme caught the attention of NHS Forest, a project researching links between health and the environment, because it empowers young people and



adults who wouldn't typically engage with prescribed therapeutic interventions or outdoor activities. They called WSWS "outstanding".

"My team and I are delighted the programme's received recognition for the work it's doing to bridge the gap between wellbeing and exposure to the natural world," says Frances Louise, WSWS Project Manager (pictured above right with a participant). "Getting out in nature and embracing our ever-changing seasons, whatever the weather, is vital for our bodies and minds, and it reminds us how to live in the moment."

- **For further information, visit www.montwt.co.uk/WSWS**



Dreaming of a... **green** Christmas

Stand for Nature Wales Project Officer Dan Hodgkiss shares 8 ways to be more eco-friendly this season

1. **Buy local** – support a community business and reduce your carbon footprint at the same time!
2. **The crinkle test** – plasticised wrapping paper (paper impregnated with plastic to make it last longer) is unrecyclable. To test yours out, scrunch it into a ball. If it returns to its original form, it's got plastic in it.
3. **Make your own gifts** – use your talents, whether that's baking, brewing, preserving or painting, for homemade pressies to delight family and friends.
4. **Reduce, reuse, recycle** – we've all received gifts that went down like a lead balloon, but one man's trash is another man's treasure. So why not re-wrap and re-gift?
5. **Home-made wrapping** – buying eco-friendly wrapping paper can cost the Earth – but it doesn't have to. Just use plastic-free newspaper or packing paper and enlist some kids to jazz it up with colourful potato prints.
6. **Fundraise while you shop** – Sign up for **easyfundraising** and every time you buy something online the retailer will make a donation to your favourite Montgomeryshire wildlife charity at no extra cost to you. Find out more here: www.montwt.co.uk/support-us/shop-online-us
7. **Bird-friendly decorations** – Christmas is a time of giving, so think of the birds! Pack little pine cones with suet/lard and seeds, and tie them together in chains, to spread around the garden and provide the birds a much-needed source of fat for the winter.
8. **Get real!** The Christmas tree debate is complex. The plastic tree is of course reusable, but its carbon footprint is only better than a real tree if you intend to use it for at least the next 5 years. However, it will continually shed micro-plastic, and once worn out will become another piece of plastic rubbish, so its long term ecological impact still isn't great. For the ultimate eco solution, plant a real tree you can reuse every year!

Go wild this winter

For the first time ever, the Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve – home to the Dyfi Osprey Project and the Dyfi Wildlife Centre – will be staying open in the run-up to Christmas.

While the ospreys – for which the reserve is so famous – have long since left for warmer climes, there'll be lots of other creatures to spot, from the feisty Jay to the magnificent Red Kite, whether from the lofty heights of the 360 Observatory or the Wildlife Watching Window within the new building. You can also find out about the reserve's beaver family, who are doing an excellent job of preventing the wetland peat bog reserve from drying out by eating willow, birch and other scrub.

It's also the perfect place to do some Christmas shopping, with lots of nature-themed gifts on sale. Plus there'll be a family-friendly Festive Fair in December (date tbc – check our Facebook page).

Then the reserve will close during January and February to allow lots of exciting work to take place. This will include the installation of a solar canopy with charging points for electric cars; improvements to the

boardwalk to allow better visitor access; and the unveiling of the Penny Floor, made up entirely of donated pre-decimal coins. What's more, there are plans to significantly upgrade the Dyfi osprey nest monitoring and surveillance in light of the terrible events that happened at Llyn Brenig earlier this year (the nest was intentionally sawn down during the night and breeding failed for the season). We'll arrange a fundraiser to pay for the increased security and hope you'll be able to help.

When the Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve all opens back up on 1st March 2022 (St David's Day) – to the dulcet tones of a Welsh male voice choir, no less – it'll be even better than before.

- **Cors Dyfi Nature Reserve will be open 9am-4pm Wednesdays-Sundays until 23rd December 2021.** For more details about what's going on, see www.facebook.com/corsdyfi/





MY WILD LIFE

Husband and wife, **Dave and Helen Eakins** from Welshpool have been volunteering with MWT for more than a decade. In that time they've forged friendships, improved reserves, developed a passion for nature – and learnt some neat countryside skills

Q: When and how did you first get into volunteering?

Dave: Helen and I moved to Welshpool in 2008 and our daughter Lyn came back from university, having finished a degree in Environmental Science, in 2009. She started going out on volunteer work parties with Reserves Officer Rob Haigh. When Lyn went off to do a PhD, Helen and I were working less and started volunteering in her place, at first intermittently. Neither of us had ever done anything like it before but we thought it was a good way to get involved in the local community and, as we were both keen walkers, going to work outside on a nature reserve seemed a good fit. We've now been volunteering for MWT for more than 10 years.

Q: What sort of tasks do you do?

Dave: We might paint hides, do thistle bashing in hay meadows, clear willow scrub or build fences. We also spent a few weeks lining a pond and helping build a seating area at Red House Nature Reserve – it's very varied.

Helen: I can now use a saw and make excellent dead hedges [barriers made from cut branches and foliage]!

Q: What do you enjoy most about it?

Helen: It's made me more aware and appreciative of the world around me. I love being outside, doing physical work and feeling like I'm making a difference.

Dave: It's also great to get out and meet like-minded people – and we've learnt so much about wildlife. Helen and I both enjoyed being outside when we first started, but being involved in the work parties over the years has made us love nature so much more.

Q: Any highlights?

Dave: We spent a lot of time at Llanymynech Rocks clearing scrub. Then the following spring/summer a patch we'd worked on was covered in butterfly orchids which hadn't been seen there in donkey's years. It's nice to get a result like that.

Helen: Earlier this year, also at Llanymynech, Rob pointed out a beautiful lizard sitting on a rock. After seeing that first one, for the rest of that day I just kept spotting them all over the place.

Q: Would you recommend volunteering with MWT to others?

Helen: Definitely. We go every Wednesday for a full day but you can give as much of your time as you want – a morning, an afternoon or just a couple of hours. Age or ability doesn't matter, either, as Rob will always find a job you're capable of and will take the time to show you what to do. You're always made to feel that what you're doing is appreciated and worthwhile.

- If you'd like to find out more about volunteering for MWT, whether it's on a work party or something else, email: vols@montwt.co.uk