

Multiple benefits of Autumn/Winter grazing



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The Green Linnet

The Newsletter for owners of Sites of Nature Conservation Interest

Get Dorset Buzzing!

Hummingbird hawkmoth

10 types of pollinator to look out for

We are increasingly seeing the effects of climate change with frequent extreme weather events and changing seasons. One consequence of the warmer autumn months is a late flush of grass growth. More grass is often welcome, especially this year; a welcome boost to conserved forage stores. However, we would like to highlight the additional value of an autumn/winter graze or cut for the conservation status of species rich grassland. Grass grows faster than a lot of the flowery perennials we like to see in meadows and in the absence of grazing some grass species like



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Scarlet waxcap

Yorkshire Fog, Common Bent and Creeping Bent can start to dominate a sward. These mat forming grasses will shade out other species and make germination of new seedlings difficult. So even if a field is species rich don't be nervous of winter grazing, ground conditions permitting of course!

Some species-rich or unimproved pastures also support Wax Cap fungi. A flush of autumn grass growth can prevent fruiting, thus sheep grazing through the autumn is particularly beneficial for these colourful grassland fungi.



Hoverfly - Volucella bombylans



Rose chafer



Gatekeeper



Hairy-footed flower bee



Ruby-tailed wasp

Thank you to SNCI landowners

A big thank you once again to the landowners that kindly allowed us to re-visit their SNCIs this summer and to the 10 dedicated volunteers who gave up their valuable time to help with the surveys and in the office. Together we surveyed 40 SNCIs across Dorset and found that the vast majority had retained their conservation interest. We were also able to add 4 new sites to the list - a woodland, meadow, chalk grassland and acid grassland.



Prime Coppice meadow

© Angela Hawkins



St. Leonards development

Victory Oak update

The Victory Oak development, St Leonards, which was featured in last year's newsletter, was declared the winner of the prestigious 2018 Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management 'Best Practice Award for Large Scale Mitigation and/ or Enhancement' and is being widely used as a case study on how to secure wildlife gains through the development process.

Front cover photos © Ken Dolbear-MBE

Dorset Wildlife Trust is running a major wildlife gardening campaign, focussed on pollinators, from March to October 2019 to encourage people to take simple actions in their gardens that will benefit nature.

Pollinators are a vital component of ecosystems and our food chain. There are at least 1,500 species of insect pollinators in the UK ranging from bees to tiny flies. Our agriculture and our planet's health depend on pollinators such as bees, hoverflies, butterflies, moths and many other invertebrates. Sadly though, we know pollinators are in trouble, with populations in steep decline due to reduced feeding and nesting habitats, climate change and pressures from pollution, disease and pesticides.

Private gardens in Dorset make up an area equivalent to 14,240 football pitches or 4% of the county. This is an area 8 times larger than Dorset Wildlife Trust's 44 nature reserves.

Gardens are in some ways the other end of a scale to Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, usually highly 'un-natural' in respect to their size, non-native ornamental species and how they are managed. But both can play their part as wildlife refuges and corridors. Green Linnet readers may well manage both an SNCI and a garden, which makes you doubly contributing to helping wildlife.



Watch out for more information on how to join Get Dorset Buzzing on DWT's website and social media in the new year. We would love to get pledges to "do one thing for pollinators" in 1,000 gardens all over the county.

Below are some pollinator habitats you might have beyond the garden:

- Hedges – studies show that during the spring, honey bees mostly use native hedgerow and woodland plants.
- Grassland and pollinator plots – flower-rich grassland will provide pollen, nectar and larval food plants for a whole host of species. Sown wildflower meadows produce up to 140x more nectar and up to 400x more pollen than amenity grassland and annual mixes produce 22x more nectar and 57x more pollen.
- Pollinators need places to live as well as pollen and nectar - bare ground, dead wood, wet areas and scrub patches can all provide specialist habitats.

Imogen Davenport
Director of Conservation

For further information on SNCIs: Amanda Marler & Sharron Abbott
01305 264620
Dorset Wildlife Trust West Dorset
Team Office: 01300 321329

For advice on Environmental Stewardship: Initially contact our West Dorset Team. They can advise you as to the best person to contact within Natural England for further help. Forestry Authority for: West Dorset & Weymouth & Portland - Chris Gibbard 01392 834278 and for the rest of Dorset - Ian Briscoe 01392 834259 FWAGSW: Alex Butler 07557 094029



Thick-legged flower beetle



Part of a nationwide network of Wildlife Trusts



Hornet



Bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*



Bee fly *Bombylius major*

Applying to Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier



For those of you thinking of applying for Countryside Stewardship next year preparation is key as the single application deadline and start date can provide a nasty pinch point at a busy time of the year. Natural England has tried to simplify the overly administrative application process and the new “Offers for Wildlife” will suit some farmers who want a simple agreement. However, for farms with SNCI, the full Mid Tier application may suit you better as it will enable you to tailor the Stewardship Agreement to suit the quality of your wildlife habitats.

This year, for the first time, management options from Higher Tier were accessible for Mid Tier applicants. This addition was welcomed at the Wildlife Trust, as it has opened Higher Tier management options and payments to landowners with SNCIs, recognising the corresponding management requirements to maintain/enhance SNCIs.

There is however a small administrative extra attached to applying for these Higher Tier or “Approved Options” within Mid Tier.

Approved Options

If Natural England run things in the same way as they did this year, you will have to get permission to include the Higher Tier “approved options” in your Mid Tier application by mid-May. This is dangerously close to the application deadline and without early planning this additional deadline is easily missed.

Approved Options include:

- Management of Species Rich Grassland - GS6
- Management of Wet Grassland for Wintering Waders and Wildfowl - GS9
- Management of Wood Pasture and Parkland - WD4
- Management of Traditional Orchards - BE4
- Restorative Pruning in Orchards - BE7
- Management of Ditches of High Environmental Value - WT3
- Threatened Species Supplement - SP9

The process of gaining approval is simple; an email with field number and location to Natural England. **However, it is very important that you check that the fields you want to put into these options are mapped on the government online mapping system – Magic: magic.defra.gov.uk/**

If you have SNCI grassland or other species rich grassland, such as some arable reversion grassland or old meadows and pasture on your farm that you consider to be flower rich we are happy to check that it appears on Natural England’s mapping system. The sooner this check is done, the better; if fields are not recognised on the government mapping system as “Priority Habitat” you will not be able to put them into the above Higher Tier management options.

The process of including them onto the Magic online mapping layer is not straight forward and you will need to get it started as soon as possible.

For more information on the above please call 01300 321329 and ask for Emily Newton.

Full details of Mid Tier options can be found at www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants



Species rich SNCI grassland

© Amanda Marler



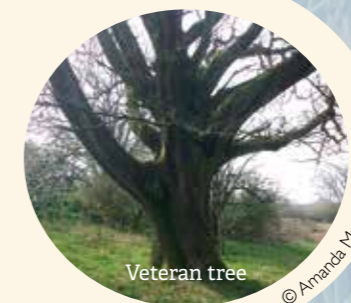
Traditional orchard in North Dorset

© Tony Bates



Species rich ditch

© Amanda Marler



Veteran tree

© Amanda Marler



Snipe

© Ken Dobson-MBE

Agriculture Bill

Following the Bill’s second reading, Defra are hoping for the Bill’s speedy passage through Parliament, ideally going to the House of Lords at Christmas and receiving Royal Assent in March/April, or possibly in wash up just before the summer recess. The proposed changes could provide additional choice in how you deliver environmental benefits but also impact the way you farm. What is certain is that these are changing times for agricultural policy and I am very interested to hear your thoughts on the new Bill and the proposed “Public Goods” themed schemes. Please ring me to share your thoughts; Emily Newton 01300 321329.