

# RANGER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Issue 140: Autumn 2023



**YOUR WORLD RANGER DAY PICTURES  
MODELS FOR NATURE RECOVERY  
FOCUS ON ... THE HAZEL DORMOUSE**

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## SUBMISSIONS

We welcome submissions from members for inclusion in *Ranger*. These can include:

- case studies of successful management techniques/projects
- scientific articles on relevant countryside management topics
- news from your managed area or region
- letters about relevant topics
- opinions about current issues

## PHOTOGRAPHS

We are always looking for good quality images to use to illustrate our articles or simply to showcase the variety of habitats, flora and fauna in our country. We also are interested in seeing images of countryside management staff doing their everyday jobs. If you are a keen photographer and are happy to share your pictures, please get in touch.

The deadline for the next issue is **31 October 2023**.

For more information and to submit your articles and photos, email Liz Bourne at [ranger@countysidemanagement.org.uk](mailto:ranger@countysidemanagement.org.uk).

Opinions expressed in *Ranger* are not necessarily those of the Countryside Management Association.

Front cover: National Trust ranger, Rachel Bedwin, raising awareness of World Ranger Day on Welsh TV programme *Heno*.



# COMMENT

If you haven't booked a place on the CMA Conference this year, then you might just be missing a great three days! There are still a few places available for Conference at Ilam Hall, South Derbyshire on the 9-11 October via Eventbrite.

The theme this year is 'Achieving Nature Recovery' and we'll be looking at what is meant by nature recovery, what it looks like in practice through some fabulous field trips and different ways it might be funded. The field trips just wouldn't be possible without the efforts of many rangers, volunteers and indeed local farmers who have allowed us access to their land so a massive thank you to them all in advance.

Field trips include visits to:

- Defra funded **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) projects** at Whittle and nature recovery in action on the **Warslow Estate**, Peak District National Park;
- **Community Rewilding at Allestree Park** with Derby City Council and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust;
- **Eastern Moors Partnership** – a countryside team of staff and volunteers have been carefully restoring an area of degraded moorland on the edge of the Peak District for the last 13 years
- **Dovedale National Nature Reserve** – Rewilding the river and managing ash dieback

You'll hear from Defra, Natural England and several Wildlife Trusts, together with our Patron, Chris Baines, who is involved in some major, national nature recovery opportunities. There will be plenty of time for questions, debate and the usual networking opportunities between delegates from all around the country. We'll also announce the latest winner of the Gordon Miller Award, hold the ever popular raffle in aid of the Thin Green Line UK and outline some of the work the CMA Board have been focusing on to benefit members. This is the first in-person Conference since the Covid era and it would be great to see as many of you as possible and catch up over a drink or two .... Just go to Eventbrite, type in CMA Conference and choose either residential or day tickets – see you there!

Throughout this edition of the *Ranger* there are many examples of nature recovery work in action throughout England and Wales, while Chris Baines is inspired by some landscapes in other countries and urges us to be more ambitious. An amazing collaboration between the National Trust, the Woodmeadow Trust and the Millennium Seed Bank, Kew, should soon see nature recovery literally blossom over large areas soon and the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) offers us a real focus on the needs, struggles and successes of hazel dormice. It is also fantastic to see so many of you celebrating World Ranger Day this year while also spending a moment or two remembering those who are no longer with us. Thank you for the photos!

Finally, a big welcome to four new CMA corporate members this quarter and an equally big thank you to Buxton Civic Association for submitting their article showcasing the amazing work they and volunteers do in their 160 acres of woodland for the benefit of local people. That's certainly ambitious and shows what can be achieved with vision and determination.

Hoping to see you in October,

**Linda Nunn**  
Chair, CMA



# NEWS FROM THE FRONTLINE

## Leeds City Council's Woodland Creation Project

Cultivating a greener cityscape for wildlife and community



Since 2020, in response to the pressing climate emergency and in collaboration with the White Rose Forest and the wider Northern Forest project, Leeds City Council's Climate Energy and Green Space Service has embarked on an ambitious Woodland Creation Project. This initiative is part of the council's proactive role in fostering a more sustainable, clean and prosperous habitat for wildlife and the city's residents. Titled the 'Woodland Creation Scheme', this project aims to plant 5.8 million trees across the city over 25 years, contributing towards the city achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

At the project's core is involving the community. The council believes that fostering a sense of ownership and participation is crucial for the success of the project; creating a dialogue with locals and encouraging feedback in tree planting areas before the first of the project's segments begins with seed gathering. Woodland Creation Rangers collaborate with local schools during September and October to collect seeds from existing trees in Leeds' parks. There are 13 seed collection boxes placed across the city for residents and families to collect seeds across the city which are all taken to the Arium (LCC plant nursery) to grow for the future.

From November to February, the next phase involves planting the young trees. The selection of tree species is meticulously tailored to suit each site's unique conditions, ensuring the best possible habitat for wildlife. Mostly native species, the batch includes 'climate-change proof' species like *Taxodium distichum* (swamp cypress), which can withstand higher temperatures while remaining non-invasive.

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The Woodland Creation Rangers also organise 'Woodland Wednesdays', an opportunity for the community to contribute to the ongoing maintenance of the woodlands. Activities include tree guard removal, woodland thinning, and beat-ups (replanting failed patches on previous sites). This collaborative effort ensures the longevity and health of the newly established woodlands.

The inclusive initiative welcomes volunteers from all walks of life. The project collaborates with businesses, schools, scout/guide groups, refugee charities and disability charities, uniting diverse groups with a common vision while racking up a staggering 24,000 volunteer hours.

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## Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Places Dark Skies Project



The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are spearheading a national all-Wales Dark Skies project. Leading on behalf of the eight Designated Landscapes of Wales – Eryri, Bannau Brycheiniog, Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks, and Anglesey, Llŷn, Gower and Wye Valley AONBs – the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB will manage the national Dark Skies project.

All Designated Landscapes have dark skies ambitions, all at different stages with everyone doing their own thing locally to improve their dark skies. A commonality that has been found between all Designated Landscapes is capital works that can be done to improve night skies. By working together, the project hopes to have a positive impact on the protected landscapes. The NOS project already has three years of successful collaboration and partnership working across North Wales. The goal is to expand this across Wales to enable the project aims to be beneficial to Wales as a whole.

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB has been granted funding through the Welsh Government's Sustainable Landscapes Sustainable Places programme to fund lighting schemes and retrofitting projects across the eight Designated Landscapes between 2022 to 2025. The project will aim to reduce light pollution in these areas

and to lessen the negative impacts for biodiversity, climate and public health and for the protection of Dark Skies.

Light pollution is an increasing issue globally, with an increase of up to 400% in the last 25 years. It is only in recent years that the true impact on biodiversity has begun to be recognised. By reducing light pollution in designated areas the project will improve connectivity by restoring a natural nightscape. Light pollution is a major driver of insect decline, especially winged insects and caterpillars. It disrupts the life cycle of a multitude of species both terrestrial and marine. Restoring natural darkness will strengthen ecosystem resilience and promote recovery of biodiversity. By looking at this on a landscape scale the project can significantly improve nocturnal corridors.

Dark Sky lighting is low energy and low carbon. It will lead to reduced carbon emissions in each designated area. Light retrofitting programmes will also reduce the overall energy consumption within the areas.

As part of the project Ridge and Partners LLP, a lighting design specialist company, have been procured to work with the Dark Skies project to deliver light retrofitting projects in all eight areas. Ridge will start by visiting each of the eight areas to conduct a baseline light pollution survey and to identify opportunities for improvement and the biggest pockets of light pollution and areas where retrofitting of lights will have a significant impact. They will identify and advise the project on which areas and buildings to target to produce the biggest positive change in light pollution.



## Update from the Coed Y Bont Phoenix Project

By Chris Harris

The project is now over halfway and still on plan. As part of the project, an Open Day and Bioblitz were organised. The Open Day was organised for 16 June at Ponrhydfendigaid Village Hall. This went very well and was advertised on different social media platforms and on flyers and posters, designed by Jo Dainty of Everyday Play and supplied/printed by Argraffwyr Lewis+Hughes Printers, Tregaron. Members of the committee and volunteers helped and were present on the day. Members of the community came to learn more about Coed Y Bont. We had our own stand and a slide presentation was set up for the history of Coed Y Bont from 2008 onwards to obtaining National Forest status and including recent work carried out with the HLF fund, especially on the path adjacent to Abbey Road and the Culvert. I also included in the presentation a short film of Coed Y Bont carried out mainly in 2015, but updated in 2019. We are grateful to other organisations who had stands at our event, including NRW, who promoted Coed Y Bont, their partnership with us and both their Life Projects concerning a five-year plan to increase the biodiversity of rivers and raised bogs in Wales, including the River Teifi and Cors Caron. These are joint between the EU and Welsh Government; the Welsh Beaver Project run by the Wildlife Trust of North Wales, looking at obtaining certification and protection of reintroducing beaver into Wales, with the first planned in the Dyfi Biosphere area just north of here near Machynlleth; the Mid Wales Red Squirrel Project, led by the South and West Wales Wildlife Trust, who work directly with Coed Y Bont, with various schemes in developing the conservation of the red squirrel; CUPHAT who have been running a project over the last 18 months, with regards to the coastland and upland areas of South East Ireland, the Cambrian Mountains and the Preseli Hills and Coed Y Bont playing a part of this. We are very appreciative of the various forms of support provided and

also David Williams who is based in nearby Cwmystwyth and is a garden restorer focusing on plant growth and landscape conservation.

There were also refreshments supplied on the day for lunch, kindly organised by Mandy Cowie. At the end of the day there was a fabulous talk by the Butterfly Recorder for Ceredigion, Paul Taylor. Many people were present to watch this. The children from the Cylch Meithrin and school also had a great time down at the woodland with outdoor education supervised by Jo Dainty of Everyday Play. Outdoor Education packs for the children were designed by Jo Dainty of Everyday Play and printed/supplied by Argraffwyr Lewis+Hughes Printers, Tregaron. Evans coaches of Tregaron supplied the use of a 53-seater bus and Kangaloo's supplied the toilets for the day.

The Bioblitz day was organised for 8 July and was co-organised between Coed Y Bont and CUPHAT. The day was promoted on social media, The Cambrian News and on flyers and posters designed by Jo Dainty of Everyday Play and printed/supplied by Argraffwyr Lewis+Hughes Printers, Tregaron. This was a great citizen science exercise. Phillipa Lewis and Dewi Roberts both of Aberystwyth University, Jo Dainty of Everyday Play and Doug Lloyd of South and West Wildlife Trust all helped and assisted in carrying out pond dipping surveys of what was left of the large pond after quite a dry period, and walks through the woodland by using our eyes, checking on camera traps and looking at photos already collated previously and the Merlin bird app. Many species were collated and eventually sent to WWBIC recording offices to add to local Welsh records. These included newtlets, several dragonfly species and nymphs, diving beetles, other insects, various plants, butterflies and birds.

Coed Y Bont had a great volunteer barbecue on July 16 enjoyed by everyone present, even though there was some rain, but we were kept dry by erecting a tarpaulin between trees over the fire. The disabled gate and posts were purchased and picked up from CCF in Tregaron. They were erected at the volunteer session in August. A moth trap was purchased and recently a battery and charger were also purchased separately. The Level 2 and 3 Forest School qualifications carried out by teachers and supervisors at the Cylch Meithrin and the School at Ponrhydfendigaid are still on schedule and need to plan six more sessions each, this time with some children present, so this will also have to be organised for September/October 2023. Forest School Equipment has been bought with HLF funding and delivered, so that these sessions will be able to be carried out at future education events when they are fully qualified. The brush cutting training was organised for September for six volunteers, including two refresher and four two-day full courses. Safety boots were bought for all six so that brush can be cut as safely as possible. There will also be T-shirts, sweatshirts and hi-viz, all with Coed Y Bont logos for all volunteers to be purchased with HLF funding in the next one to two months, so sizes are being collated.

I will post further developments in the next issue. Thanks again to the Heritage Lottery Fund for providing the funding, NRW for their continued support and of course our volunteers and committee members are paramount in continuing this project and for assisting in managing the woodland as a whole.

### ABOUT THE NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND IN WALES

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# MODELS FOR NATURE RECOVERY

By Chris Baines, Hon Patron

*Joni Mitchell was almost right! Certainly, we have "paved paradise" to put up parking lots, and it is true that "you don't know what you've got till it's gone" but Isabella Tree's great book *Wilding* prompted me to think beyond my own wildlife losses. I have a depressingly clear idea of what has gone in my lifetime, but what would my late grandfather's sense of loss have been?*

Growing up on the edge of Sheffield, I can clearly recall wet pastures that hosted dozens of nesting lapwings. The butterflies on Mum's buddleia bush were way more colourful and varied than the flowers themselves. Water voles were constant companions on any walk along the Rivelin Valley, and on the very occasional summer evening rides in my grandad's car, my chore was to scrape squashed moths from the headlamps. Now, a single moth highlighted in the headlight's beam is cause for comment.

If we are to take the current call for nature recovery seriously, then we need a clear picture of the scale of the loss, but we also need to experience the scale and complexity of an "unpaved paradise". Where do we go to see, and hear, and smell landscapes that can serve both as reminders of our losses, but also as inspiring role models for sustainable recovery?

Back in the late 1990s I enjoyed a week's walking in France's Cevennes National Park. Nightingales, black-caps and green woodpeckers provided the daily soundtrack, and ancient footpaths wound through meadow after meadow crammed with wildflowers that were rarities in Britain even then. I remember a whole morning of meadow saxifrages, and an afternoon of yellow mountain pansies. Previously I had been thrilled to be shown single specimens of both, but only on highly protected UK nature reserves. I came home with a deep sense of our collective loss, and a determination to see a shift from nature preservation to creative conservation.



The group spent a full hour one day, photographing a single crab spider in hawthorn blossom, and another hour waiting patiently for a yellow-bellied toad to resurface from the muddy water of a cart-track puddle.

Credit: Martin Bailey

I called on all the conservation mavericks I knew personally. Some worked in government agencies, some in wildlife charities and we met regularly for about four years under the banner of the *Rebuilding Biodiversity Group*. This was a full decade before publication of the government-commissioned Lawton Report, but our conclusion was the same. Nature recovery would call for a far bolder and more joined-up approach to landscape management. Outcomes included the Wildlife Trusts' *Living Landscapes*, the RSPB's *Futurescapes* and other ambitious innovations.

The weakness of the Cevennes as a landscape role model for the UK lies in the poverty of its farmers. While the biodiversity was, and still is, spectacular, it comes at a social cost. Family labour and ecotourism combine to make it work. The same applies to another truly inspiring pastoral landscape that I visited 15 years later. Romania's Zalău Valley lies close to the remote rural foothills of the Carpathian mountains, and the ecological complexity of its ancient hay meadows blew me away. Imagine as many as 80 species of flowers and grasses in a square metre, and an annual harvesting regime unchanged for centuries. This is the landscape that King Charles, then Prince of Wales, chose to adopt, invest in and to help to sustain from 2010 onward – a glorious gesture, and a great model of practical conservation for remote rustic communities in Eastern Europe, but difficult to translate into the British landscape.

This spring I enjoyed a week of wandering through yet another appetite-whetting rural landscape. After attending the annual European Forum for Urban Forestry, held this year in Krakow, a three-hour train journey took me to the far southeastern corner of Poland, close to the Slovakian border. Here, a long history of invasion and border disputes has left the countryside sparsely populated and delightfully unspoiled by progress. I joined a small group of fellow Brits, guided by the North Wales naturalist and wildlife photographer Martin Bailey ([www.wildlifeservices.co.uk](http://www.wildlifeservices.co.uk)) for a few days travelling at a snail's pace through farmland and forest. The group spent a full hour one day, photographing a single crab spider in hawthorn blossom, and another hour waiting patiently for a yellow-bellied toad to resurface from the muddy water of a cart-track puddle. It took me a day or so to acclimatise to this degree of 'slow-nature' but I loved it.

Martin has been visiting this small rural community regularly for the past ten years and his local knowledge is impressive. There are wolves and beavers, storks and eagles here, but the thing that struck me most was the familiarity of the great majority of the species. The flowers in the meadows are *our* wildflowers. The dawn chorus is *our* dawn chorus. With a few exceptions,



the butterflies are species that would have been commonplace in my grandad's countryside. Cuckoos called constantly and corncrakes kept us awake at night. I can only recall ever seeing one grass snake at close quarters in Britain, and that was in a chalk quarry nature reserve in Essex. Here, we saw four in an hour. This is the way our countryside once was. Could it ever be this rich again?

I guess that most people who work in nature conservation and countryside management in the UK will share my frustration. The remote rural landscapes I have described can certainly serve as inspiring reminders of the past and as useful pointers towards a possible future, but how do we deliver the necessary scale of change within our own farming countryside? The rewilding movement is already providing some answers, with the Knepp estate in the vanguard, and exciting projects such as the Dorset Wildlife Trust's *Wild Woodbury* initiative delivering spectacular biodiversity benefits. Knepp's explosion of purple emperor butterflies, and Wild Woodbury's ninefold increase in singing skylarks in its first two years are truly inspiring – but neither would claim to be run-of-the-mill farm management schemes.

We do have pioneering nature recovery models within the mainstream farming landscape. One place to look for inspiring examples is the network of farms and farmers who make up the Pasture-Fed Livestock Association ([www.pastureforlife.org](http://www.pastureforlife.org)). In Sir David Attenborough's sixth *Wild Isles* programme, [www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0fd45w7/wild-isles-saving-our-wild-isles](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0fd45w7/wild-isles-saving-our-wild-isles), a farm in the Yorkshire Dales features as an example of a rural business where reduced inputs and more conscientious farming practices have delivered increased profitability along with spectacular and rapid nature recovery. That farm is just one of many dozens of examples, all available as well-documented case studies on the PFL website. These are *real* family farms and *real* farmers, farming more profitably and sustainably by working with nature.

There is a rising tide of positive action for nature recovery across the UK. Some of the model projects are in the charitable sector, some are tenanted farms, and some are private estates. All of them are vitally important. In each case there is someone with a passion for making positive and sustainable change. What they all need is advocates who can forge the links, share the lessons and champion the progress. That is where the CMA has a really valuable role to play. I consider myself very lucky to have experienced a little of the unspoiled countryside of rural Poland, France and Romania. This has certainly helped to spur me into action in the past. Now we need to foster equally inspiring large-scale landscapes of our own.



# The nature of orchards

With costs continuing to rise and budgets continuing to be stretched it often feels like the opportunities for training and development have diminished in recent years. I hear many a story of ranger days of old, being sent on conferences and week-long training courses. I also often hear people worried about leaving the day job; that there is so much to do and their workplace couldn't cope without them. As well as telling the story of my recent trip to the Czech Republic, this is also a call to arms to invest in your own training and development and seek out good opportunities.

Grampus Heritage has been around since 1997 and is a non-profit organisation supporting training and development. They had previously received most of their funding via the European Erasmus Scheme; sadly this funding ended with our departure from the EU. There is a new domestic arrangement, the Turing Scheme, although the opportunities are different.

I spent a week in a rural area of the Czech Republic learning about orchards with five other participants from the UK – three from the National Trust, one from a national park and one other who had a deep interest. The idea is that the skills and knowledge will help us in our day jobs, which is particularly true in the Yorkshire Dales where we want more orchards.

As well as learning the ins and outs of fruit tree management, we also learnt grafting skills and managed to squeeze some scything in. I ate my body weight in cherries and discovered weeping apple trees and Amelanchier (June berry) which was very tasty. We also visited a lot of orchards and most gardens had at least two fruit trees. In Prague, there were two incredible orchards we went to, right in the heart of the city. These places were oases of calm within a busy metropolis, and were also brimming with wildflowers and invertebrates, plus more cherries!

We also experienced some incredible wildlife, including hearing turtle doves on several occasions. We watched two families of red-backed shrike flutter around the orchard, the fledglings still making noise to be fed whenever the adults appeared. We heard yellowhammers all around the orchard and nearby farmland and one evening a stork flew overhead. Night-time brought new adventures in spotting fireflies and an encounter with a family of badgers. To top it all off, one of the team saw a pine marten and we literally stumbled across a wild boar one morning. We think it was injured but I made a speedy getaway when it started to move! Not that there aren't challenges in conservation in the Czech Republic and our host told us about local councils wanting to remove trees for safety, and the intensification of farming. Plus, a growing disconnect between people and nature.

I think the great value of these experiences is having some time away from your day job, to allow your brain time to rest, ponder and absorb new things. Plus you get to meet some wonderful people. So, to those who can't leave the day job because it's so busy, you won't ever look back and regret taking the time to do something different. In fact, you'll come back inspired and full of ideas to help you do even more.

For opportunities through Grampus Training and the Turing Scheme please visit [www.grampusheritage.co.uk](http://www.grampusheritage.co.uk)



A native hazel dormouse in a woodland. Credit Clare Pengelly.



# FOCUS ON ... THE HAZEL DORMOUSE

A native hazel dormouse. Credit Hattie Spray.



The hazel dormouse used to be a common feature of the UK's woodlands, but numbers have plummeted in recent years due to habitat loss and fragmentation, and the climate crisis. According to PTES' State of Britain's Dormice 2019 report, nationwide populations declined by a staggering 51% since 2000 and dormice are considered extinct in 17 English counties.

New research has confirmed that climate change is exacerbating hazel dormouse decline. Increased precipitation and fluctuating winter temperatures, as well as density dependence all negatively affects hazel dormouse populations. Worryingly, changing weather patterns – which are increasing – appear to exacerbate populations that are already struggling. The study warns that without mitigating these factors, dormice could disappear from our woodlands altogether.

The research was led by Dr Fraser Combe, former PhD Student at Manchester Metropolitan University, and supported by wildlife charity People's Trust for Endangered Species which spearheads the UK's hazel dormouse conservation work. It has been published in leading journal *Animal Conservation*.

By studying long-term data gathered on 4,000 animals from four UK populations (via PTES' National Dormouse Monitoring Programme) and one in Europe, Fraser, PhD supervisor Dr Edwin Harris and colleagues were able to investigate exactly what impact changing local weather patterns has on population

growth rates, and how these interact with other factors contributing to the species' decline.

Lead author Dr Fraser Combe explains: "Our results showed that increased rainfall, fluctuating winter temperatures (rather than stable cold temperatures) and density dependence are all contributing to the species' decline. As population density increases, a population can reach carrying capacity, resulting in more individuals competing for food and nesting sites. In areas where food and shelter are plentiful this is less of an issue, but lack of sympathetic woodland and hedgerow management leads to less diverse habitat. This, combined with increased fragmentation of habitat patches, means that the number of dormice those areas can support is lower. The plights of these populations are exacerbated by a changing climate.

"When a population is at capacity, a bad winter or a year of fluctuating and unusual weather has a stronger and more negative effect on dormouse populations than during a stable winter. We also found that although warmer and wetter weather impacts dormice of all ages, there were subtle differences between adults and juveniles."

The research showed that in adult dormice, both over winter survival and fecundity (the ability to breed successfully) were negatively impacted by increased average temperatures and higher rainfall, especially when these patterns of warm, wet weather were interspersed with cold periods. It's not uncommon for hibernators to wake up intermittently, but frequent waking depletes the adults' energy reserves by the time they wake in spring, thereby hampering their breeding capacity.

Juveniles were impacted before hibernation and over winter. If juvenile dormice don't build up enough fat reserves before winter their chance of surviving hibernation is slim. That, combined with waking up early or more frequently and being forced to be active when they should be asleep and when there's less food around, has serious consequences too.

But the study did offer some cause for optimism: conservationists can help mitigate against these negative effects, giving dormice a fighting chance. Measures such as coppicing, improving hedgerow quality and connectivity between suitable habitats, planting diverse tree species that fruit and flower in varying seasons, and host an abundance of invertebrate species, and creating plenty of scrubby edge habitat can provide more nesting sites and ensure year-round food availability. This will help improve resilience through periods of unpredictable weather patterns, and hopefully enable dormice to better survive winter and successfully breed come spring and summer.

Nida Al-Fulajj, Conservation Research Manager, People's Trust for Endangered Species explains: "Fraser's study highlights how vital long-term data collection is. Thanks to the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP) which PTES has been successfully running since 1993, we're able to gain insights into how different populations are faring year on year and implement targeted conservation measures to populations that need the most help. Through our ongoing work we're starting to make a difference, but we desperately need more better-managed woodland and hedgerow habitats across the country in order for dormice to really become commonplace again."

### Re-introduction of hazel dormice into the National Forest

As part of ongoing conservation efforts to boost the population of the hazel dormice, this year 38 were released into a woodland at NT Calke Abbey, Derbyshire by PTES, the National Trust and partners.

PTES and partners release healthy, captive bred dormice every year into well-managed woodlands across the country to try and combat this decline. Since the programme began in 1993, 1,078 dormice have been reintroduced to 25 different woodlands in 13 counties. The annual reintroductions are part of Natural England's Species Recovery Programme and the reintroduction day is the culmination of months of hard work by several partner organisations, including the Common Dormouse Captive Breeders Group including Wildwood Trust, Paignton Zoo and ZSL.



A native hazel dormouse. Credit John Webley.

This year, the reintroduction took place in a National Trust-owned woodland, where the National Trust's ranger team and a group of volunteers will be responsible for the ongoing care of the dormice and long-term management of the woodland after the reintroduction has taken place.

Jon Lewney, Countryside Manager, National Trust says, "The National Trust has been custodian of this ancient woodland since 1985, and over that time we've sympathetically managed the landscape so that it supports an array of native wildlife, which we're thrilled will now include hazel dormice. This diverse woodland, which is home to oak, hazel and honeysuckle, will provide lots of secure places for them to forage and nest. With the help of our volunteers we'll monitor the reintroduced population over the coming months and years to ensure they remain healthy, and in time we hope they will breed and disperse into nearby woodlands to create a self-sustaining wider population."

This year, all dormice released are captive bred by the Wildwood Trust, a member of the Common Dormouse Captive Breeders Group, before they undergo an eight-week quarantine and receive full health-checks by expert wildlife vets at Paignton Zoo and ZSL's Disease Risk Analysis and Health Surveillance (DRAHS) team. Regular health screening ensures that only healthy dormice are released into the wild, and the dormice harbour only native parasite species of importance to biodiversity, both of which are vital in mitigating against disease. After reintroduction day, the dormice are left to quietly acclimatise to their new surroundings from the safety of their nest boxes, which are gently placed within larger mesh cages filled with foliage, food and water. Local volunteers will top up their food and water daily, and after ten days, and a further health examination, the mesh cage doors are opened to allow the dormice to explore their new home. When the dormice no longer use the mesh cages, they will be removed, leaving the dormice to live freely in the woodland. Slowly the dormouse population will increase and in time they will start to disperse to new woodland and hedge areas.

To find out more about PTES' dormouse conservation work, visit [www.ptes.org/dormice](http://www.ptes.org/dormice)



A native hazel dormouse mother and juveniles in a nest box. Credit Selena Bone.

# WOODLANDS AND WILDFLOWERS – PERFECT PARTNERS

By Chloe Bradbrooke

Three organisations, three training days ...

A unique collaboration has blossomed between the National Trust, the Woodmeadow Trust and the Millennium Seed Bank, Kew, trialling some truly innovative approaches to delivering nature recovery at scale and at pace.

We are faced with the dual challenge of biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. One action we can take that goes some way to addressing these threats is planting trees.

It sounds simple but while there are great gains being made in terms of increasing woodland cover, there are still alarmingly steep declines in our woodland specialist flora, birds and especially butterflies given that many woodland specialists are dependent upon specific larval foodplants.

We believe that a woodland ecosystem is so much more than a field of trees – trees being the cherry on top of a diverse and rich mix of ground flora, fungi and soils and everything that holds them together and lives within.

New woodland creation projects often involve tree planting into areas of improved pasture or ex-arable soil. A large proportion of the flora associated with ancient woodland is extremely slow to disperse, potentially taking several decades or even centuries to colonise, even when planted adjacent to existing ancient semi-natural woodland. On isolated sites, these species may never arrive.

We simply don't have centuries to spare – a level of urgency is required. We are exploring the idea of creating woodlands from the bottom up – introducing ground flora right at the beginning.

The unique part the three partners play are as follows:

- **The Woodmeadows Trust:** ten years of experience of delivering exemplary habitat creation schemes as outlined above.
- **The Millennium Seedbank:** a wealth of expertise in seed biology and germination along with sustainable seed collection and storage.
- **The National Trust** has the land and ambition to deliver outstanding habitats for nature and people.

The aims of the partnership are to:

- restore land with little ecological value to something nearing priority habitat where floristic diversity is a key factor
- produce mosaics of species-rich grassland and woodland, combining natural processes and local seed harvesting and propagation techniques
- provide hands-on experiences for community and volunteer groups
- deliver wildflower recovery and introduction programmes for rare and threatened plant communities, including ancient woodland indicator species
- provide the best practice technical training.

To launch this venture and spread the ideas being trialled, this summer we delivered three training days for National Trust rangers, gardeners and related consultants, involving 60 people over three days.

- Day 1 – Delivery of presentations from the three organisations and a visit to the trial site in Sussex.
- Day 2 – Practical exercise in woodland wildflower seed collection and storage techniques.
- Day 3 – Visit to Three Hagges Woodmeadow, the Woodmeadow Trust's flagship site in Yorkshire to see first-hand the amazing habitat created, plus a bonus visit to the Forest of Flowers.





# Woodland Flora Introduction Pilot – Nymans Estate, West Sussex

## Core pilot aims:

- Increase the floristic diversity of the woodland creation site.
- Trial and monitor four separate methods of delivering new floral communities.
- Engage local volunteer and community groups with practical delivery.

To create a botanically diverse woodland field layer within a newly created woodland, a variety of plant species will be introduced, including ancient woodland indicator species and those characteristic of woodland edges and rides.

We will also encourage meadow species in the open spaces to establish wildlife-rich ‘woodmeadow’ habitat mosaics, comprising mixtures of species-rich grassland with stands of trees and shrubs.

The pilot phase will explore and experiment with a variety of flora introduction methods.

Using a shortlist of key species, we will scope out viable populations to harvest from once they set seed.

## Four trial introduction methods:

1. Nursery-grown ‘plug’ plants, propagated from collected seed.
2. Direct seeding from manually collected seed.
3. Soil and leaf litter transfer by way of soil plugs and samples of the humus/leaf litter layer from areas expected to have high seed content.
4. Transplanting small numbers of bulbs and plants from highly populated areas of the neighbouring ancient woodland estate.

The hope is to inform future projects, to raise awareness and inspire others within the conservation sector to explore similar approaches.

## Woodmeadows

Woodmeadows are a rare and largely unrecognised habitat type in the UK, although undoubtedly they used to exist here and still do in mainland Europe. They are an intricate mix of trees and wildflower meadows creating an incredibly biodiverse mix worth much more than the sum of its parts.

Dan Carne, Woodmeadows Trust, explains: “Woodmeadows are an ancient form of agroforestry that was once widespread across Britain and Europe. Combining hay meadows with stands of trees (often pollarded for animal fodder) historically allowed farmers to increase productivity while also providing livestock with shade and shelter. Because of their complex structure, woodmeadows support a huge variety of niches and microhabitats for invertebrates, reptiles, birds and plants. Woodmeadows are among the most botanically diverse habitats in the world. The interplay of light and shade combined with haymaking and aftermath grazing fosters fascinating plant communities that obscure the distinction between woodland and grassland, with shade-tolerant species such as lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis* and wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* growing happily alongside light-demanding yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and saw-wort *Serratula tinctoria*.

At a time when food production and tree planting are often perceived as competing priorities, woodmeadows and wood pastures present an exciting opportunity to restore multifunctional habitat mosaics to our landscapes. If we want these habitats to support characteristic, diverse, plant communities, then we need to consider giving these plants a helping hand – unfortunately just planting trees isn’t always enough. The Nymans flora introduction pilot will compare and contrast multiple flora introduction techniques while also being used as an opportunity to share learning and promote collaboration and innovation.



Three Hagges Wood training day.

# Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, Kew

By Chris Cockel, UK Conservation Projects Coordinator, RBG Kew, Millennium Seed Bank:

Kew’s Millennium Seed Bank Partnership is, as the name suggests, all about working in partnership with organisations around the world as well as in the UK. None of the work we do towards saving plant species from extinction would be possible without the dedication and hard work of our partners. One current major project within our UK programme is called: Native Seeds for Restoration: diversity and resilience in the UK ([www.kew.org/science/our-science/projects/native-seeds-restoration-uk](http://www.kew.org/science/our-science/projects/native-seeds-restoration-uk)). As the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, with remaining biodiversity well below minimum thresholds for healthy ecosystem function, it is essential that we take action now at a landscape scale to reverse the catastrophic decline in all types of habitat that has taken place over the last 100 years or so. In the face of continued urbanisation, infrastructure projects, commercial and housing developments the task can seem daunting, but it is not too late if we work together. Yet our landscapes and habitats are so fragmented that we must aim not just to join up these fragments and provide habitat corridors, but also to create new areas where plant and animal life can thrive.

On top of this, it is acknowledged that the long-term survival of many species will depend upon assisted recovery and reintroduction projects, just like this one. Yet, the supply of high-quality native, locally sourced, genetically diverse seeds and plants for restoration that are adapted to current and future conditions remains a challenge. This is, however, a critical factor if our actions are to be effective in the long-term. This pilot phase at Nymans newly created Wealdend Wood provides the perfect testbed to put theory into practice, building on the experience of the Woodmeadow Trust to create the type of species-rich habitat mosaic that has been all but lost in the UK.

Kew, working in partnership with the National Trust and the Woodmeadow Trust, is a fantastic example of organisations joining forces to make a real difference on the ground and being able to achieve so much more than we would if working in isolation.



Wildflower polytunnel, Three Hagges.

# The National Trust

By Tom Hill, National Trust, Tree and Woodland Adviser LSE

Regardless of logos and name badges, when it comes to biodiversity loss and climate change, we’re all facing into the same issues right now. It’s essential we make time to listen and learn from others’ experiences and innovations to understand what is working for them and what hasn’t. Working in silos will never work if we’re going to make a meaningful difference towards global crises – teamwork and dissolving organisational boundaries will be absolutely critical to our success.

There are times when all of us feel helpless in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss and many people now work more remotely than ever, leading to feelings of isolation and despair. Training days like these remind us that we’re not alone in striving for a step change in sustainable land management and, as with these projects, that tangible evidence exists of nature recovery being actioned at scale and over short timeframes where the right interventions and support are in place.

The transformation of these places from barren monocultures to thriving ecosystems in a single decade gives all of us hope that dramatic changes and restoration are realistic within our lifetimes with the right incentives and aims. They’re literally alive – you can see, hear and smell it all around you.

What’s really interesting is that people have played a hands-on role in rejuvenating this landscape alongside natural processes – and this goes against the overarching trends to sit off and wait for nature to do all of the work. So many of our most important habitats are relics of a time when manual interventions enhanced and supercharged natural processes to exceptional effect – hay meadows and coppicing are two examples. Time is running out and we need to remain hands-on to help fix broken landscapes from scratch if we truly want to see abundance where there’s currently a total void in life.



Nymans Lead Ranger, George Curd, with collected seed.

# WORLD RANGER DAY 2023

Once again, on 31 July, rangers around the world came together to remember those who died or who were injured in the line of duty, and to celebrate the work rangers do to conserve the Earth's biodiversity.

Across the country, our members stopped and reflected on the courage and sacrifice that rangers make. Here are some images from that day.



The Government of Jersey Department for the Environment and the rangers from The National Trust for Jersey on WRD. They had aimed to do some invasive species clearance, targeting some Virginia Creeper which is threatening a sensitive bird refuge area on our west coast, but the weather got the better of them. Luckily, not before a picture could be taken.



Volunteers working on Mousehold Heath, Norwich, remembering and celebrating the crucial conservation work that rangers undertake around the world. Photo: Will Stewart.

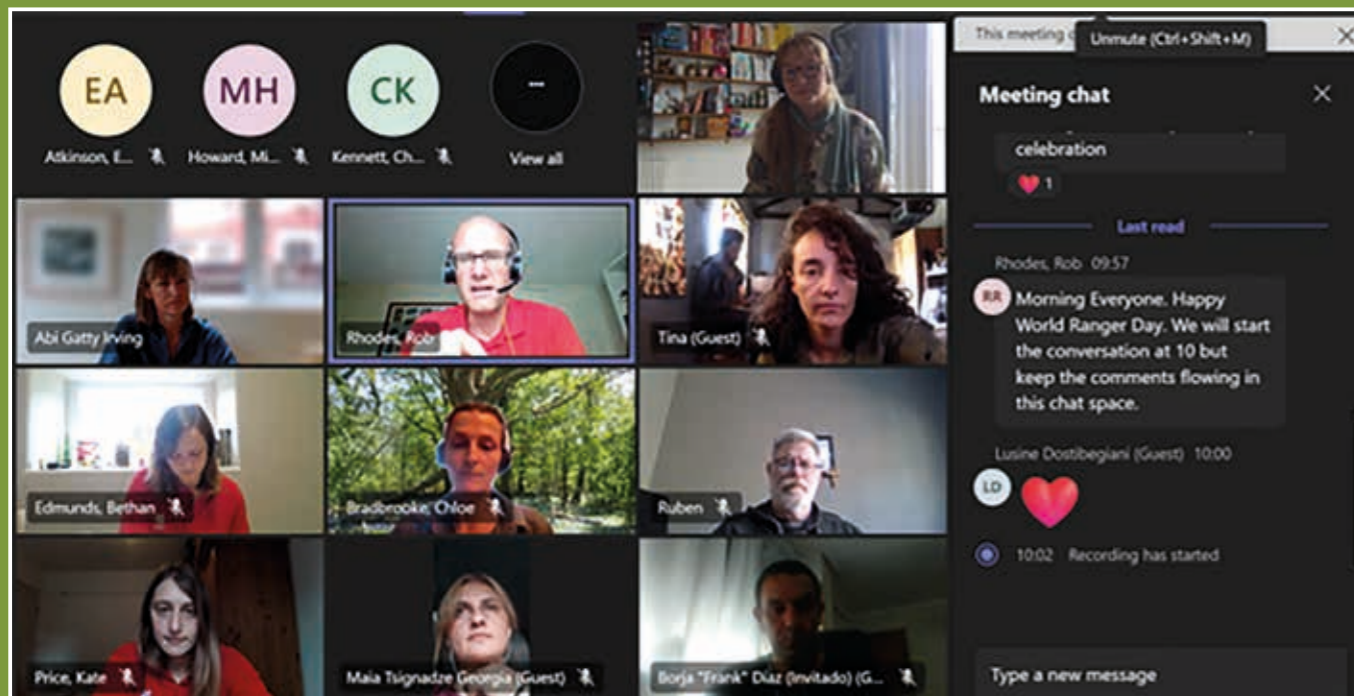


Nick Stanley and team at Langdon Hills Country Park, Essex.



To celebrate World Ranger Day 2023, The Land Trust – a national greenspace charity – brought together a number of their managing partners in the south of England which included rangers from Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership, Bracknell Forest Council, Deadwater Valley and The Conservation Volunteers. The group explored some of Bracknell's Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) while exchanging ideas and learning from each other's experiences.

WRD on Orrest Head, Lake District National Park. One of the Miles without Stiles routes, with two field rangers, Finn and Den.



A virtual campfire conversation was held for WRD 2023, with National Trust rangers from across England, Northern Ireland and Wales. The theme was 'Protecting nature's protectors: sharing experiences and solutions to collective challenges'.

Rangers and related professionals around the fire were:

- Tina Lain, Director at Forgotten Parks Foundation DRC/Upemba NP

- Ruben De Kock, Development Manager at LEAD Ranger
- Luso Dostibegian, Community Ranger, Samshvilde Canyon, Georgia
- Maia Tsignadze, Chairman Georgian Ranger Association, Georgia
- Borja Diaz, Ranger and Training Officer at European Ranger Federation (ERF), Spain
- Kate Price, Ranger at Shropshire Hills AONB, National Trust
- Bethan Edmunds, Area Ranger at Blickling Estate in Norfolk, National Trust



In Wales they managed to raise the profile of World Ranger Day and the footpath work across Wales by filming an excellent piece for the Welsh news magazine programme, *Heno*. They recorded the team hard at work and an interview with Rachel Bedwin, National Trust ranger, who has learnt Welsh and moved from London in order to join the footpath team.



Jessica Coatesworth and some volunteers in the Peak District.



Ranger Neil Mutch and the Friends of Bidston Hill Country Park, Wirral, commemorating WRD, and the Friends of Flaybrick Memorial Gardens.



Kate and Alistair at Wenlock Edge, Shropshire.

# RANGERING AROUND THE WORLD: PART 1

## HOW TWO UK NATIONAL PARK RANGERS FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE USA

Myself and my partner, Kate, were UK National Park Rangers until August 2022, having both worked in the role for over five years. And although we absolutely loved our jobs – especially their variety and capacity to have a tangible impact – we had always been curious about what rangers do in other places and in totally different environments.

So we began planning a trip with a difference. Instead of just travelling to visit places we wanted to see, we set out to find opportunities that would allow us to spend a day – or several months! – in the shoes of rangers around the world, facing the challenges they face and learning everything we can about the skills and techniques they use to tackle them. And where better to start than in the birthplace of national parks: the United States.

## OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

### Paddling through the Northwoods of Minnesota

Starting a three-month placement with the US Forest Service, we were thrown in at the deep end. No sooner had we stepped off the plane in Minneapolis, caught a bus to Duluth, and been driven up to Minnesota's Northwoods on the US/Canadian border, than we found ourselves setting off, by canoe, on an eight-day trip into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness as new Volunteer Wilderness Rangers. Located within Superior National Forest, the Boundary Waters are best described as a world of water. Covering over one million acres and containing more than 1,000 lakes, this is one of America's great wildernesses, and the only one that's accessible just by canoe.

After learning how to paddle, portage (the process of flipping your canoe onto your back and carrying it, along with two 50lb packs, for up to several miles between lakes), and fell hazard trees using an axe and a two-man crosscut saw, we began to adjust to a routine of eight-day trips into the wilderness, followed by five days' rest.

Spending time in a place like the Boundary Waters, where the sound of wolves howling and the spectacle of the Northern Lights are not uncommon, was incredibly special. And the work we undertook to help keep this wild place accessible, was deeply satisfying. The three months we spent working alongside the Forest Service's rangers – who, in some cases, had been paddling these lakes for over 30 years – was a privilege, and the skills they imparted on trail maintenance, crosscut saw use, and the less-than-glamorous art of digging new latrines, will certainly stay with us.



Charlie and Kate paddling through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness on an eight-day wilderness trip with the US Forest Service.



Portaging a canoe through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.



Felling a hazard tree near a tent pad with an axe and crosscut saw in the Boundary Waters.



Looking out over the Pu'uoloa Petroglyphs at sunset in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park.

BY CHARLIE WINCHESTER

ALL IMAGES: CHARLIE WINCHESTER AND KATE DZIUBINSKA.

### INTO THE HIGH DESERT OF NORTHERN ARIZONA

Just as the snows began to fall and the temperatures plummeted in Minnesota, we set off on the next leg of our trip, this time heading for the high desert of northern Arizona. As well as moving from the far north of the Lower 48 to the arid southwest, we also transitioned agencies from the Forest Service to the National Park Service, beginning another three-month stretch – this time in Petrified Forest National Park.

Transitioning to a totally new environment, our role was equally different. Working primarily with the Park's biologist, day-to-day tasks involved everything from checking wildlife camera traps for porcupines and pronghorn, to surveying wild horses in the Park's more than 50,000 acres of designated wilderness.

An unexpected bonus of our time in Arizona was the chance to work in the Park's Palaeontology Lab, learning how to prepare 22-million-year-old Late Triassic fossils with some of the country's leading experts.

And despite Petrified Forest being located in a desert, during the winter months that we were there it was often bitterly cold and carpeted in snow.

### TIME FOR SOMETHING TROPICAL

All the more reason for the excitement we felt when it came time to move to our next placement: Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Perhaps, like us, Hawai'i is one of those places you never expect to actually visit, largely because of how remote it is.

So when we stepped off the plane on the Big Island – with Mauna Loa and Muana Kea looming above us, and the prospect of three months helping to conserve one of the few US National Parks with an active volcano in its midst – we couldn't quite believe it.

During our time at Volcanoes we surveyed for invasive little fire ants, constructed fences to keep out the pigs and goats that do so much damage to the native flora, out-planted a range of rare endemic Hawaiian plants, and cleared some of the numerous non-native species – including our own European gorse – that threaten the Park's delicate rainforest ecosystem. We also assisted with Park Service helicopter operations (often required to move materials across lava flows and to remote locations), helped conserve habitat for the Hawaiian hawkbill, and banded endemic Hawaiian honeycreepers.

The landscape and ecosystems of Hawai'i – with its lava flows and rainforest kīpukas – is so different to anything in the UK (and we never quite got used to walking over the unstable and unbelievably sharp 'a'ā lava, or driving for many spine-shaking hours on 'roads' improbably cut through these flows). But we were reassured to find that many of the challenges rangers face are similar to ours – invasive species, habitat loss and climate change to name a few.

### KEEP FOLLOWING OUR ADVENTURE IN THE NEXT EDITION OF RANGER MAGAZINE

In the next part of our journey we climb into the mountains of the High Uinta Wilderness, Utah, and explore America's largest National Forest, Alaska's Tongass.

*Also, keep up to date on Instagram.  
Just search rangering\_around\_the\_world*



Sunset while camping in the Boundary Waters Wilderness Area, Superior National Forest, MN.



Petrified Forest National Park's Painted Desert after a fresh winter snowfall.



Kate in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park out-planting the rare Pele lobeliid (*Clermontia peleana*) which was thought to be extinct by 1999, but was brought back from the brink using an old seed collection and a few rediscovered wild plants found in 2007.

# Buxton Civic Association – a small charity with a big mission

At the gateway to the Peak District the town of Buxton is blessed not only with beautiful buildings and architectural heritage but with woods that surround the town. If you look at an aerial photograph of Buxton then you can see how vital the woods and trees are, providing a beautiful and much needed refuge for people and wildlife.

Buxton's woods are home to a rich tapestry of life, from 100-year-old beech trees, ash, elm, oak, Scots pine, rowan, sycamore, chestnut and field maple to elusive woodland birds such as the spotted fly catcher. The woods range from plantations – courtesy of the Duke of Devonshire who planted trees on the barren hillside 200 years ago to hide the scars of the quarrying and lime burning that took place there – to ancient woods harbouring the remains of medieval ditches and hosting beautiful displays of bluebells and other indicator species that enchant and delight visitors.

At the forefront of maintaining, managing and enhancing these woods is the Buxton Civic Association (BCA), a small charity with a big mission that owns 160 acres of woodlands and manages them for the benefit of the people who live in the town, the many visitors who come each year, and for the wildlife that make the woods their home or use them as corridors to move around.

Under the skilled guidance of their woodland team headed up by Woods and Country Park Manager Harriet Saltis, and supported by a growing group of dedicated volunteers, the woods have become a living testament to the power of restoration and regeneration. By actively removing invasive plant species, maintaining existing SSSI herb-rich calcareous glades as well as creating new glades, they've allowed native flora to reclaim the space with sunlight, as well as the only known wild juniper in Derbyshire. This process is part of a long-term plan and will not only rejuvenate the woods' aesthetic appeal but will also improve the overall health of the woodland ecosystem. With the careful planting of native trees and ground flora, the association's efforts will ensure that future generations can enjoy the woods with an even richer diversity.

Buxton Civic Association understands that conservation is a shared responsibility. Through a range of community engagement initiatives, they foster a sense of ownership and pride among local residents. Workshops, guided nature walks and educational seminars serve as platforms for the community

to learn about the delicate balance that sustains the woods. By involving local schools, the association is sowing the seeds of environmental stewardship in young minds, creating a legacy that will transcend generations.

But Buxton's woods are more than just a sanctuary for nature; they hold historical and cultural significance that stretches back centuries. Two hundred years ago the hillside above Poole's Cavern Visitor Centre was a hive of activity as lime burners quarried the limestone and temporary kilns fuelled with coal from the local coalfields produced lime to satisfy the burgeoning agricultural revolution.

Aware of this heritage, BCA works to preserve the woods' historical remnants. From maintaining ancient pathways to safeguarding archaeological sites, their efforts ensure that the woods remain a living testament to the past, allowing visitors to step into a realm where nature has recovered and restored land from our industrial past.

## As we navigate an increasingly urbanised world, their efforts stand as a beacon of hope

While the Buxton Civic Association has achieved remarkable milestones, their journey is not without challenges. Rapid urbanisation and climate change pose constant threats to the delicate balance they've worked so hard to maintain. However, armed with a resilient spirit and a deep-rooted passion for nature, they remain undeterred. Looking ahead, their aspirations include expanding their educational programmes, establishing wildlife monitoring initiatives and forging stronger collaborations with other conservation organisations and ensuring that the woods will be a refuge and sanctuary for people and nature for years to come.

David Green, BCA's recently appointed Chief Executive, said, "We are proud custodians of these woods which are an amazing resource. Our dedicated team of two work tremendously hard, so other people can learn, rest and play within this inspiring landscape. We want our woodlands to be enjoyed, and welcome those who want to work with us as conservation or maintenance volunteers, or freelance activity providers. All ideas are welcome, as we seek new ways to make the woodlands relevant to people's lives, recognising this will secure their future in the longer term. Anyone interested should get in touch with Harriet or I."

## Contact for further information:

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David.green@buxtoncivicassociation.org.uk  
buxtoncivicassociation.org.uk



# CMA SPOTLIGHT

There are four main points to mention in this edition.

The week before the CMA Conference, many of those who lead the ranger associations in Europe are convening in Dartmoor to discuss how best to promote their work and how that may assist in attracting much needed funding. The European Ranger Federation (ERF) is utilising some funding from Greenpeace, to bring the ranger associations together for a week-long residential in Dartmoor National Park. The workshops should see some innovative and creative ideas emerge through collaboration between the many countries. As the CMA Chairman, I will be joining the group for two days before travelling up to Ilam Hall.

Also present at this gathering will be two representatives from our twinning partner, the Georgian Ranger Association (GRA), Salome Idoitze and Luso (Lusine) Dostibegian. Having had flights paid for by the ERF Greenpeace funding, that means they are also here ready to attend the CMA Conference the following week. To those of you attending Conference, we know you'll welcome the two rangers, Luso and Salome, warmly. Two further ERF representatives have also been offered delegate places at Conference; we have not yet been informed who these might be.

(By the way – what is the collective name for rangers? Answers for the next edition please ...)

Thirdly, the SCRA and CMA have recently been meeting online to jointly submit a topic for a presentation at the World Ranger Congress in 2024. Together we feel the urban/suburban greenspace sector rangers, indeed all rangers who do not work in 'Protected Areas' or areas under 'Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)' do not appear to get the recognition they deserve for their work from the IRF nor other international bodies that seem to only focus on PAs and OECMs. Protected Areas and OECMs together make up 15% of the world's land and are asked to achieve '30 by 30'. We would ask 'What about the other 85% of the world's land?' We know that much of that, especially in the UK, is managed by rangers outside of Protected Areas; they are also looking to achieve '30 by 30'.

Lastly, the CMA Board is following up on its Expression of Interest (Eoi) submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) some months ago. A bid for funding would focus on two issues; increasing the resilience of the CMA as a body through bringing in paid staff and secondly, developing a new, comprehensive ranger training programme for those working and volunteering in the sector. The NLHF has recently announced a new funding strategy 2023–33 and the CMA believes the release of the new strategy may well now open the doors again to discuss the Eoi. The Board will now go back to the NLHF once again.

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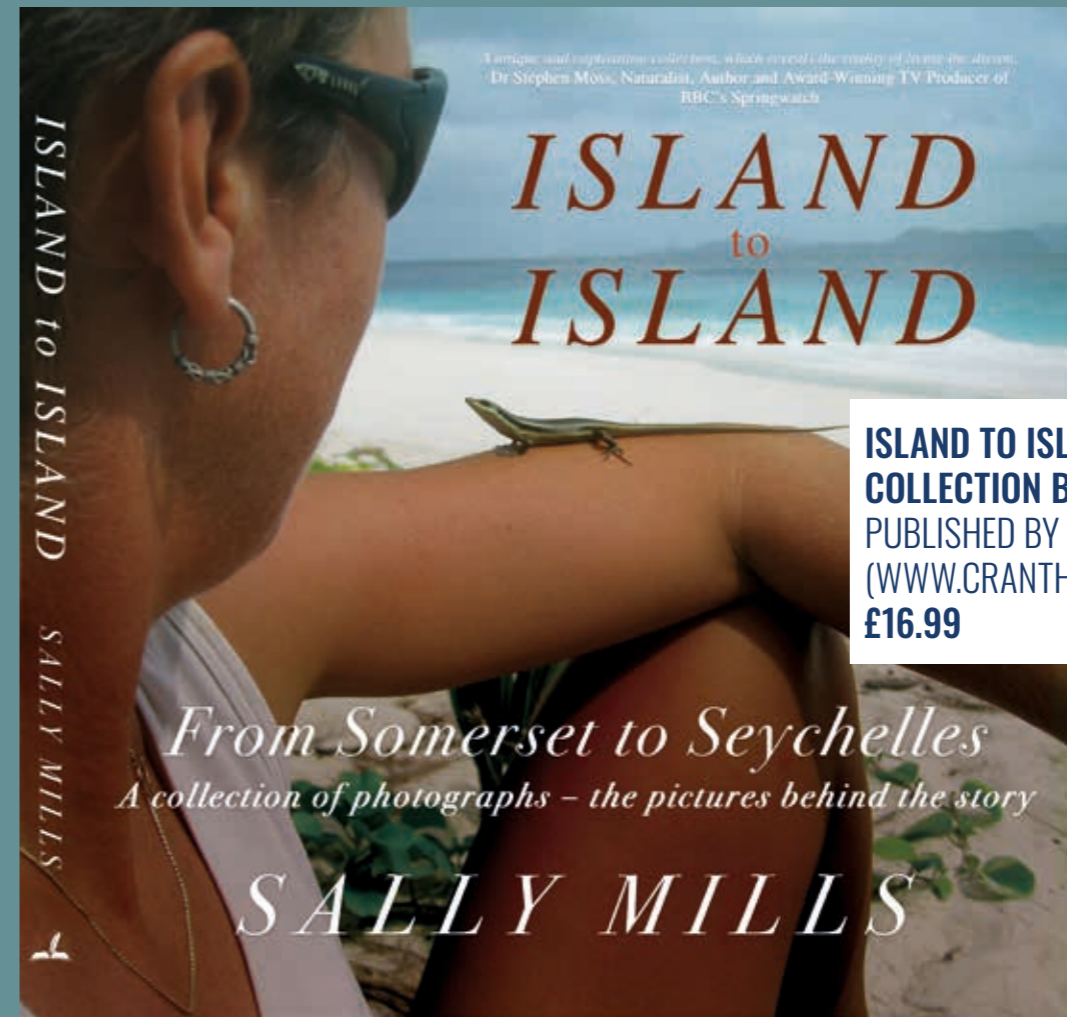
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## BOOK REVIEW

In our autumn 2022 issue of *Ranger* we ran a book review of Sally Mills' wonderful memoir, *Island to Island*, in which she wrote of her 20-month adventure managing a remote tropical island nature reserve in the Seychelles with her partner and others. She has now published a follow-up to this volume, *Island to Island Photographic Collection*, an evocative book reflecting the privileges and challenges of living and working in paradise.

With only six human inhabitants, millions of seabirds and some of the rarest animals on the planet for company, some may say that Sally and her partner were living in paradise. Indeed, the stunning photography does reflect the wealth of biodiversity on the island. But she also successfully captures the realities of

living in the middle of the Indian Ocean. How to deter ants and other unwelcome creatures, as well as the only way to have a freshwater shower – all are within the pages of this book, alongside incredible images of fairy terns, magpie robins, hawksbill turtles, golden orb-weaver spiders and many more.

The book captures their experience, from the everyday challenges of keeping themselves fed to the day-to-day work of managing a remote tropical island. How do you grow vegetables in extreme conditions? Where do you get your water from? What do you make fishing weights from (the lead from old melted-down batteries, since you ask!)?

Sally says, "The *Island to Island: Photograph Collection* was born from the release of the novel *Island to Island*, which led to frequent requests for the publication of images to complement the story. The watercolour illustrations provided in *Island to Island* served to

whet the appetite of readers to see more about the fascinating story that the novel portrays.

"A number of illustrated talks were given on the release of the novel, which raised people's desire to see the images behind the story. The beauty of the tropics set against the stark and harsh reality of living in a remote location without modern conveniences serves to provide an eclectic mix of visual representations of what life was really like living in tropical paradise.

"*Island to Island* was so well received I was compelled to compile a comprehensive collection of photographs that would have not otherwise been widely shared or seen."

Even if you haven't read *Island to Island*, this photographic collection may well inspire you to contemplate your own life-changing adventures.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**CMA Annual Conference:** achieving nature recovery

**9-11 October 2023**

Ilam Hall, Ashbourne, Derbyshire

**Discounted rate for CMA members: £195**

Nature recovery has become the cornerstone policy for improving nature, its benefit to people and its capacity to be the natural solution to environmental issues such as climate change. One of its main elements is the improving, increasing and joining up of land at a landscape level.

Our conference addresses what is meant by nature recovery, what it looks like in practice and how it can be resourced.

Through a combination of presentations, discussion groups and field visits, we hear from experts and practitioners who will share their knowledge and experience across a range of exemplar projects, including urban fringe habitat restoration projects to partnerships with farmers and industry.



**South West Ranger Forum – Lower Otter Restoration Project**

**20 October 2023**

**10 am–3.30 pm**

Rolle Estate Office

**Free event**

Decades in the planning, and with site works underway since 2021, the Lower Otter Restoration Project (LORP) is reconnecting the River Otter to its floodplain for the first time in 200 years. This complex climate mitigation project, to allow the tide back in by breaching failing embankments, will create over 50ha of internationally rare intertidal habitat and safeguard public access and infrastructure.

The day will start with a project overview – the exciting opportunities that galvanised delivery of the project and some of the challenges faced. This will be delivered inside at the Rolle Estate Office, in the East Devon countryside.

After lunch and a ten-minute drive to the Otter Estuary, there will be a site visit following a circular route around the reserve (around 4 km).

Topics for discussion will include:

- local climate mitigation
- landscape change as we shift poor-quality agricultural land to new uses
- the opportunities and challenges of creating a nature reserve
- benefits to people and wildlife hopefully to see
- visitor management
- opportunities for further landscape recovery

Drinks will be provided but please bring your own lunch.

[www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk](http://www.lowerotterrestorationproject.co.uk)

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# NEW MEMBERS

The CMA is pleased to welcome the following new members\*:

**NORTH WEST:**

Graham Borden-long – Member  
Emily Currie – Student Member

**NORTHERN IRELAND:**

Izzy Young – Student Member

**SOUTH EAST:**

Jake Barnes – Member  
Donna Cook – Member  
Jon Dyer-Slade – Member  
James Glaysher – Member

**SOUTH WEST:**

Stuart Smith – Member  
Thomas Wood – Member  
Drew Baigent – Supporter Member

**WALES:**

Huw Morgan – Member

**WEST MIDLANDS:**

Richard Williams – Member

**YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE:**

Michael Ackrel – Supporter Member

Wayne Hawkins – Supporter Member

**The CMA is delighted to welcome as Corporate Members:**

Buxton Civic Association  
Exmoor National Park Authority  
Lichfield District Council  
Yorkshire Water

\*Membership applications processed by 31 August 2023

## SHOWCASE WHAT YOU DO IN A VIDEO FOR CJS

CJS has booked a stall at the 2024 Virtual Careers Fair which starts during National Careers Week in March and is looking for some 'on the job' videos of you lovely people doing your job. Obviously sitting at a computer putting jobs online isn't quite what a conservation professional does so the staff at CJS don't have any videos of practical work.

If you have something already or if you are willing to create some content (just get someone to video you for a few minutes – they only need snips) then they'd be eternally grateful. Obviously you would be credited and you will hopefully (fingers crossed) encourage more people to dive into the world of environmental conservation.

As we all seek to save the planet the number of jobs can only grow, let's hope the wages do too! Get in touch with Amy at CJS if you have content or have an idea for content. Thanks. [amy@countryside-jobs.com](mailto:amy@countryside-jobs.com)





# CONTACT THE CMA



The Countryside Management Association supports countryside management professionals throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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