



Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve During the year 2010-2011



NEWWildlife Ltd
17 Nant Alyn Road
Rhydymwyn
CH7 5HQ
Tel: 01352 742115
Email:
info@newwildlife.org.uk

Facts and Figures!

- > **26 Educational visits have taken place this year.**
- > **737 people have attended events throughout the year.**
- > **We have worked with over 13 community groups.**
- > **2000 hours have been worked by volunteers this year.**

Access and Interpretation

Another successful season of grazing has drawn to a close. Eleven Highland Cattle grazed the DA grasslands



lowland neutral grassland is being achieved, although it will be a number of years before any firm conclusions can

be drawn (see section on Monitoring Performance). Yellow rattle has spread to a number of compartments, probably as a consequence of the hay cuts taken in 2008 and 2009

between July 19th and late September (being removed a little earlier than planned as they had used up the available sward). Monitoring suggests that the desired improvement of the

(wet conditions precluded a hay cut in 2010). We are building a productive relationship with Eric Davies, the grazier, and have successfully applied to CADW for renewal of

Scheduled Ancient Monument consent for the works. Monitoring of bird, reptile and butterfly species has taken place again in 2010: it has been a particularly successful years for birds, with a number of new species recorded using the valley floor, including Biodiversity Action Plan Species such as Yellow hammer, Common redstart and Reed Bunting, the latter two of which bred successfully. A number of reptile refugia and hibernacular structures have been created, involving a variety of volunteer groups



Traditional orchards

Fifty four crab apple 'M111' rootstocks were planted in compartment 03a in early spring. Fifty of these survived and have been either 'grafted' or 'budded' with a range of local apple varieties, some of which are unique to North East Wales. Volunteers have begun to develop skills in fruit tree

propagation. The grass in the orchard was cut in early September and was used to make reptile basking piles and to mulch the young trees. Youths from Ysgol Maes Hyfryd, the local special needs school and a group of young autistic people from Argoed High helped to produce

banners to explain the future value of the orchard for biodiversity. In addition, 300 Crab apples propagated from seed collected on site have been grown on for use in a variety of projects across the region.



Community Events Programme

Public Events

We have organised 9 public events at Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve this year which have been successful. The reptile ramble was put on in place of the wildflower walk that was originally planned as FoRV had

decided to run a similar event at the same time of year. It was decided that as they wildflowers were being covered at the FoRV walk, a reptile ramble would be put on to avoid duplication. Over the last year we have had approximately 382 people

attending our events. This is an increase on last year despite holding fewer events.



Invertebrate Week

"Many thanks for another excellent event, it was great to see the lizards and glimpse the slow worm before it hid.... and catch up on wildlife news. It was a neat finish to see and handle Mick's grass snake and slow worm – I'm sure we all found it both informative and enjoyable!" Betty Lee, re: reptile ramble, Aug 2010.



Common Lizard by Dave Hill



Wepre School Visit

School Visit

The last year has been incredibly busy with school visits from primary to secondary to college aged students. We have redesigned our primary sessions to cover 7 sessions: Ponds dipping, Mini beast Hunts, Wildlife Walks, Rhydymwyn Valley Life Story, Food Chains, Habitats and Wild Art.

These have been updated to cover more cross curricular subject in the National Curriculum and encourage even more schools to visit in the future. An added element of follow up work for the students to take back to their schools has also been incorporated. The secondary session have been developed through

the large number of secondary school visits we have received this year. We are encouraged by the number of repeat visits and endeavour to continue developing the opportunities available for secondary school students at Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve.



Argoed High School Students - Grassland Work

Walks and Talks

Our walks and talks program has also been very popular this year with 273 people either visiting the reserve or hearing a talk about it. We already have a number of walks and talks lined up for the year 2011/12. The demand has been so high this year that a Learn to Lead a Wildlife Walk

course was put on for NEWWildlife members and volunteers, where participants could spend the day with the Community Wildlife Education Officer learning about the reserve and how to lead groups. One participant of this course in particular has assisted on a number of walks and will hopefully be ready to lead on

session in the future allowing for even more visitors to access Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve.



Pen Y Fron Chapel Group - Guided Walk

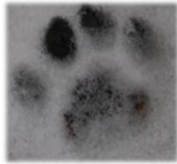


Butterfly by Dave Hill

Training Courses

This year we have run 6 training courses in wildlife identification. All of the courses have been well attended except the reptile course and a total of 82 people have taken part in the training scheme program. Local experts were contracted to run the courses to give the participants the most

up to date and relevant knowledge possible.



Junior Rangers Club

It has been another successful year for the Junior Rangers Club, which at the close of this financial

year has 12 members. The children attend RVS once a month after school to take part in a wide variety of activities. This year they have been tracking mammals on the reserve, creating birds' nests out of natural materials, building scarecrows for the autumn fair and their end of year trip will take them to Techniquet, Glyndwr in April.

Volume 1, Issue 1

"I'd just like to say "thanks" for a brilliant course. It was well run, really enjoyable and very informative. I learned such a lot! I thought the workshops and case studies were thought provoking and really useful exercises. I have been lead warden at Great Yarmouth little tern colony where we fence off the beach to protect the little terns and many of the issues, conflicts and resolutions were similar. Well done to all involved. It was well worth all your hard work and giving up a sunny weekend for, much appreciated. Thanks again." Feedback from S.Lewis, Advanced Amphibian course participant, April 2010.



Public events at Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve. *Left:* Looking for millipedes; *Centre:* fungi foray; *Right:* looking at a grass snake on the reptile ramble



Looking for amphibian eggs on the advanced amphibian course.

Volunteering

The number of volunteers have fluctuated throughout the past year due to changes in the program however we currently have 37 volunteers on our books with another 18 at various stages in the registration process. We are now running 2 regular volunteering days mainly based at Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve where volunteers can come along and take part in a variety of tasks such as hedge planting, pond creation and management, building reptile hibernaculas, seed collection and propagation and

species monitoring. We have run 7 work experience placements over the past year at Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve with students from establishments such as Llysfasi College, Glyndwr University and an A level student from Mold Alun School. The placements have ranged in length from 1 week, to 1 student who is on a 2 year placement. A number of placements have been set up in the last year for people with learning difficulties. These placements are for

people who are not able to mix properly in the regular volunteering parties and who attend the sessions with a qualified carer. So far 2 of these placements have taken place and both have been very successful. They give the participants a chance to take part in outdoor activities that improve their physical health, social skills and emotional and mental health. One of these placements is still ongoing taking place for an hour a week for the foreseeable future.



Ben Patterson VRO
April - October 2010

Riverscape

Ranger Karl Martin is working with another placement student, Scott Andrews, to complete a river corridor survey of the reserve and its environs, including NVC surveys, habitat assessment and field sign surveys for mammals and other riparian wildlife. This will lead to recommendations on

how the river corridor can be improved for wildlife: at present, the culvert forms a challenging barrier to movement for some species, in particular the Polecat (another BAP species which has been recorded as breeding on site for the first time this year), who was witnessed moving five kits across

the concrete channel into the woodland – with great difficulty! As illustrated below, this event was captured on camera by yet another placement student, Dave Hill, who is visually documenting the reserve and its wildlife on our behalf.



Polecat (*Mustela putorius*)

Species suffered severe declines in 19th c. and faces a number of threats, including:
Persecution by gamekeepers
Road casualties
Overgrazing and loss of den sites
Diseases affecting prey species e.g. myxomatosis.

Upcoming Events at Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve

Butterfly Course, Thursday 19th May, 10am-4pm, Led by Jan Miller, Butterfly Conservation. Members- £25 Non-members- £60 Booking essential.



Reptile Ramble, Tuesday 24th May, 9.30am-12.30pm, Led by Mick Brummage, County Recorder for Reptiles. FREE, Booking essential.

In the pipeline for 2011

Moth Identification Course
Wildflower Identification Course
Summer Tree Identification Course
Fungi Course
Autumn Fair
Fungi Foray
Halloween
Santa Trail
Christmas Fair



Pictures by Dave Hill

Below: Grassland Right: Chicory



Rhydymwyn Valley Nature Reserve
17 Nant Alyn Road
Rhydymwyn
Flintshire
CH7 5HQ

Visitor Centre: 01352 741591
NEWWildlife: 01352 742115
NEWW Email: info@newwildlife.org.uk