

# Bulletin 5 News

## Contents

Keeping Coastal Adventures Sustainable – The Pembrokeshire Marine Code .....	1
Conservation Issues Facing Pembrey Burrows Local Nature Reserve .....	5
Brown Hares in West Wales .....	9
Profile: Roger Mathias.....	11

## Keeping Coastal Adventures Sustainable – The Pembrokeshire Marine Code

Recent years have seen significant increases in the number of outdoor activity providers and wildlife & dive boat operators within Pembrokeshire. This has largely been in response to the growing demand for such activities throughout the UK. Visit Wales (The Wales Tourist Board) are currently in the process of marketing Wales as both an adventure tourism and water sports destination (through initiatives such Wild West Wales) which are likely to continue to have a significant impact on visitor numbers for the future.

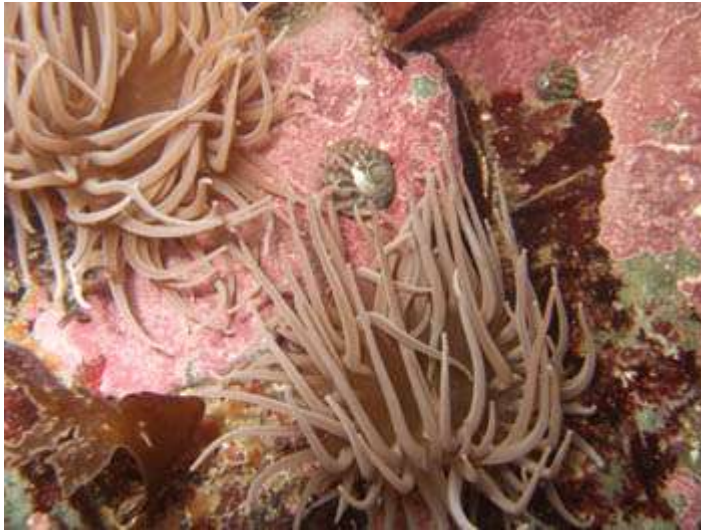


Boat Trips. Photograph: Sarah Beynon

Pembrokeshire has been identified as a key site for such developments as it is viewed on a national scale as relatively undeveloped. Some of the adventurous outdoor activities being heavily marketed include marine wildlife watching trips, boating and sea kayaking.

Pembrokeshire’s rugged cliffs, hidden estuaries and dramatic offshore islands are becoming more accessible to those seeking to explore and discover Pembrokeshire. Adventure activities

often take place in areas of high densities of wildlife, or in normally inaccessible areas of the coastline.



Snakelocks Anemonies. Photograph: Tom Luddington

Many of these areas are also used as roosting / breeding sites for wildlife, and are internationally important habitats for protected species. These areas, which are all within the Pembrokeshire National Park, include Skomer Marine Nature Reserve, Ramsey Island (RSPB Reserve) and Grassholm (RSPB - the world's third largest gannet colony).

Clearly there is a potential conflict of interest between people out discovering and adventuring, and wildlife / conservationists as activity tourism increases.

The Pembrokeshire Marine Code was developed to promote a sustainable approach to the use of Pembrokeshire for outdoor activities within the marine environment (e.g. Wildlife watching trips, diving, boating and sea kayaking). It was developed during 2003 after concerns by conservation groups and operators of disturbance to marine wildlife. Put simply, the project was created in order to limit disturbance and protect marine wildlife from increased boating activities in Pembrokeshire.



Coasteering. Photograph: Tom Luddington

Conservation groups and local wildlife trip boat operators worked in partnership to develop the PMC to be a practical, workable and reasonable code which above all protects the wildlife. The PMC was trialled over a two year period and was officially launched to the public in May 2005.

Since its launch, membership has expanded to include all watercraft users, including divers and kayakers and has also targeted the wider public. This year the Activities Liaison Officer (ALO) has agreed a new marine code specifically for sea kayaking which has been circulated to all Welsh Canoeing Association members, and published in kayaking magazines and online.

([www.pembrokeshiremarinecode.org.uk](http://www.pembrokeshiremarinecode.org.uk))



Kayaking. Photograph: Tom Luddington

Membership to the marine code group is free, and members receive free training courses on recognising sensitive species of wildlife, and on following the detailed site and species specific codes of conduct. The Activities Liaison Officer organises meetings which bring together operators and conservationists to discuss conflicts of interest, and to discuss how best to ensure that activities are sustainable both for business and the environment. The PMC is self policed by the members, (both operators and conservationists), and the general public. Reports of code breakage are followed up on by the ALO with support from the Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum team who also manage the projects.



Climbing

The website for the PMC is a valuable resource for people visiting the area with details of all the members who operate wildlife trips in Pembrokeshire, and details on the agreed access restrictions and codes of conduct for seals, sea birds, cetaceans and basking sharks.

Maps of the offshore islands and other areas in Pembrokeshire sensitive to disturbance (such as Stack Rocks) have been produced which clearly mark out the seasonal restriction zones which have been agreed to prevent disturbance to wildlife. These maps are printed on waterproof material and provided free to members along with fact sheets about Pembrokeshire's environments and wildlife. The fact sheets and maps can both be downloaded for free from the PMC website. A poster has also been produced and displayed around Pembrokeshire with a simplified version of the key points to remember:

- **Be considerate** - keep your distance from marine wildlife and do not touch feed or swim with it. Avoid hauling out, landing or mooring close to young animals as this will distress parent animals and prevent them from feeding their young.
- **Keep your distance and an even speed** – Stay at least 100metres away from marine wildlife and nesting breeding sites and remain no longer than 15 minutes. Avoid erratic movements and changes in speed.
- **Think about where you are going** – Try to steer clear of cliffs, gullies and enclosed bays; many species use these areas to breed.
- **React to what is around you** – Allow marine wildlife to go where they want. If they approach your watercraft you should remain on a steady course and maintain a safe navigable speed.

You can help to look after marine wildlife by reporting deliberate disturbance or harassment of wildlife to either the ALO on 07977 939325 or the Police Marine unit on 02920 772 446. If possible take down the time, date and photograph or video the incident, and write a description of what you have seen.

The main strength of the Pembrokeshire Marine Code scheme is that it involves a partnership approach with all key stakeholders involved in the decision making and enforcement. Achieving agreement with the operators ensures that the codes of conduct are reasonable for businesses as well as protecting wildlife from disturbance.

To find out more about the Pembrokeshire Marine Code, please contact the ALO, Tom Luddington on 01646 696134, or log on to the website:  
[www.pembrokeshiremarinecode.org.uk](http://www.pembrokeshiremarinecode.org.uk)

## **Conservation Issues Facing Pembrey Burrows Local Nature Reserve**

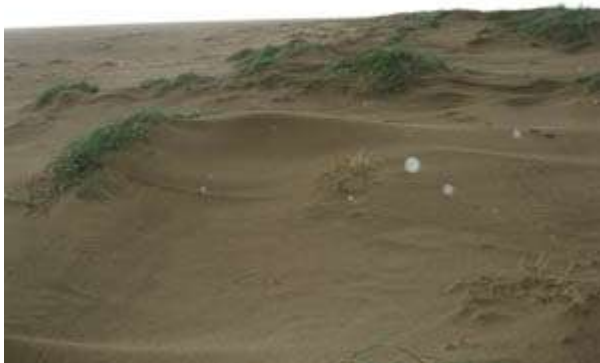
The Pembrey Burrows Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is simply stunning. Not only does it boast an unspoiled, 8-mile long beach, but also a complex dune system that provides an idyllic setting for a leisurely stroll. There is a blue flag zone complete with lifeguards which is popular during the summer, and a long stretch that is largely desolate, used recently by horse-riders, dog walkers and locals wanting to escape the throngs of tourists.



Pembrey Burrows Local Nature Reserve. Sarah Beynon, 2007

I met up with Simeon Jones, who is funded by CCW to manage the reserve in order to find out just what it takes to deal with an area like this.

Pembrey Burrows LNR covers 150ha, with a similar sized un-grazed adjoining salt marsh known as the Saltings. The dunes have the perfect community composition of high-calcium dune slacks, and both the saltmarsh and dunes are botanically and faunally rich and ecologically rather important. The embryo dunes at Pembrey Burrows are also a rare ecosystem, as the correct conditions for them to form are not often met.



Embryo Dunes at Pembrey Burrows Local Nature Reserve. Sarah Beynon, 2007

One of the main problems facing the LNR is the introduced species Sea Buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*). The Buckthorn arrived in the 19th century along with the pine trees that constitute the neighbouring forestry. It is native to the east coast, but thrives in the calcium-rich soils of the west coast, and spreads so fast that its long, vertical and horizontal roots and suckers are even disturbing the tarmac roads!

Although Sea Buckthorn is incredibly invasive, it is also a very useful plant. The bright orange berries have traditionally been used as tribal war-paint on the face, and both the berries and leaves can be eaten. The berries are in fact rather tasty straight from the bush!



Sea Buckthorn. Sarah Beynon, 2007

### **Success in controlling Sea Buckthorn**

The Sea Buckthorn has now taken over the majority of the LNR, and various techniques are in operation to halt its spread. However, this can be a rather costly business. In 2007 £10,000 has been forked out to bring in diggers for 3 weeks in order to remove the larger stands. However, although the diggers are effective at the removal of large bushes, small bushes are left intact. Due to the invasive nature of the Buckthorn, if the mechanical removal is not followed up with correct grazing management, the plant will simply return the following year. Simeon has noticed however that there is very little re-growth around Elders, which are left along with Willow in order to maintain habitat heterogeneity.



Controlling the Sea Buckthorn at the Pembrey Burrows LNR. Sarah Beynon, 2007

There are also 2 experimental plots that are grazed with cattle. In plot 1, buckthorn was mechanically removed, and re-growth was sprayed with a topical broad-spectrum herbicide. However, there were problems with surrounding non-target die-back from the spray. The 35ha plot is grazed at a restoration grazing density of 0.8units/ha/yr. However, this intensity is not sustainable over long term, and even at this density, there is still Buckthorn re-growth present in the site. In plot 2, where there was initially less buckthorn, there has been no mechanical or chemical removal. Cattle grazing at the same density as in plot 1, are keeping buckthorn levels under check by trampling it, but are not eating any re-growth, which is a cause for concern.



Sea Buckthorn re-growth after mechanical clearing in 2006. Sarah Beynon, 2007

Another problem is that it has been necessary to introduce supplementary feeding by December in 2006 and 2007, meaning that the area has only supported the cattle for 3 months. In this way, it is not feasible for the farmer to continue grazing the area.



Cattle Grazing the Pembrey Burrows LNR. Sarah Beynon, 2007

Nevertheless, despite the problems faced, there is a positive outcome to the project already: the area that is not grazed is impassable on foot, but grazed areas are passable. Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) (and hence lots Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*) butterflies) as well as Eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis* agg.) and the uncommon Fragrant Evening-primrose (*Oenothera stricta*) are flourishing in the grazed plots.

The reserve also supports a number of rare invertebrate species including the Grass Eggar Moth (*Lasiocampa trifolii*) as well as the Strandline Beetle (*Nebria complanata*) The area is well botanised by the Llanelli Naturalists, which allows the restoration process to be well monitored, and successes noted.

### **Future Plans**

Simeon is considering introducing native sheep breeds such as Herdwick to Pembrey Burrows LNR. Unlike cattle, these animals have been shown to actually chew at the buckthorn re-growth. Simeon also urges that it is important not to forget the importance of rabbit grazing, which creates the most plant species-rich stands of the whole LNR.

However, as with any invasive species, there is no quick-fix solution, and this management plan really must a long-term aim. If CCW funding were to dry-up, Simeon believes that in 10 years, we would be back to where we started. He adds that “hopefully we will get £10,000 to fence the area that has been cleared this year so it can be grazed, or it will all be for nothing”.



Pembrey Burrows LNR. Sarah Beynon, 2007

Sarah Beynon.

## **Brown Hares in West Wales**

For the last two years, the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales has been working hard to try and find out more about the distribution of brown hares in West Wales, specifically in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.



Before the survey started in 2006, talking to the residents of Ceredigion, it became clear that hares were present in much of the county, but the official records did not really reflect their perceived abundance. Thus it became one of the first projects of the Brown Hare Action Plan in Ceredigion to undertake a survey, with the intention of increasing the number of records and finding out where hares were really living. Pembrokeshire was even more of a mystery; even fewer records were held by the local recorder. Were there really so few brown hares in the county?

The first challenge was to encourage people to report hares when they saw them, but to make sure that the reports were reliable. Brown hares can look similar to rabbits, but with some easily distinguished features- they are much larger, and have huge ears with black tips. Funds were raised from the People's Trust for Endangered Species and the Countryside Council for Wales to produce a survey form for members of the public. The forms included photos of both hares and rabbits for identification, and a tear off report section to encourage people to send in their sightings.

In 2006, around 280 new sightings were reported through this survey in Ceredigion, some going back a few years. This year, we have had a further 120 (see map). By contrast, the total number of records received for Pembrokeshire since the very start of the survey- over two years- is only nine. This is even more surprising when you consider that the Ceredigion results included some sites right at the south of the county, on the Pembrokeshire border.

The results for Ceredigion have shown what we suspected- that hares are widespread, but that there are more of them than we had previously thought. It also appears that they do particularly well along the coastal strip and on the edges of the uplands, with good numbers of reports from areas like Trisant and Devil's Bridge.

The lack of records from Pembrokeshire backs up evidence from the county mammal recorder that there are few hares in the county. However, it does contradict evidence from a national survey published in 2003 that used farmer questionnaires to produce distribution data (Vaughan et al, 2003). This suggested that brown hares were widespread across Pembrokeshire. So, where does the truth lie on 2007? Are there still lots of hares out there that we don't know about?

We hope to continue the survey for as long as we can, in order to generate the most complete picture possible about the distribution of hares in west Wales. Carmarthenshire County Council are also collecting distribution data, completing the west Wales picture. The aim is to use the comprehensive distribution data to identify key hare 'hotspots' for more detailed analysis of changing numbers, and to identify future action that can be undertaken to improve habitats and land management for this enigmatic species.

Thank you very much to everyone who has taken time to help out with the survey. If you've seen a hare, and would like to let us know (especially in Pembrokeshire!!) contact:

Ceredigion/Pembrokeshire: Dr Lizzie Wilberforce, 07970 780553,  
[l.wilberforce@welshwildlife.org](mailto:l.wilberforce@welshwildlife.org)

Carmarthenshire: Isabel Macho, 01267 224653, [IMacho@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:IMacho@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)

Vaughan, N, Lucas, E, Harris, S and White, PCL (2003) *Habitat associations of European hares Lepus europaeus in England and Wales: implications for farmland management* Journal of Applied Ecology No. 40, pp. 163-175

*Dr. Lizzie Wilberforce.*

Scarce Moss Link could not be found

## **Profile: Roger Mathias**

Roger Mathias is a farmer that not only talks about the importance of conservation, but puts his words in to action on his farm at Furzy Mount in Camrose, which has recently been described as a ‘flora and fauna gem’.



Roger Mathias

The family has farmed Furzy Mount since the early 1900s and until a few years ago it was primarily a beef cattle and arable holding. However, due to low stock prices over the years, and following a passion for the environment, Roger now rears his two nephews’ dairy heifers and beef followers. In this way, he has the time to ensure he manages Furzy Mount with the aim of environmental gain at the forefront of his motives.



Clouded Yellow, *Colias croceus* at Furzy Mount. Sarah Beynon, 2006

Roger joined the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme in 2005 and has never looked back. He now boasts a 2 acre fenced-off corridor to encourage barn owls, unsprayed over-winter cereal stubble to support declining farmland birds and insects, as well as one pond and more in the pipeline. He has already planted over 2,000 native trees adjoining a mature broadleaved woodland, and is re-creating an area of marshy grassland.



Native tree-planting, Sarah Beynon 2007

For several years the entire farm has been monitored for key bird species and in 2006 and 2007, Roger put down four acres of wild bird cover, comprised of a mixture of sunflowers, winter and spring triticale, quinoa and phacelia. These species hold their seed well over the winter, ensuring a continuous food source for bird populations. When you enter the field, you witness a spectacle as literally hundreds of birds rise from the crop. Roger is working alongside the RSPB in order to assess the method of planting these crops that best benefits bird species, and the farm is regularly visited by RSPB volunteers.



Wild bird seed crop, Sarah Beynon 2007

He has also been deeply involved with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) ever since Pembrokeshire became one of the first county branches to be established in Wales back in the early 1980s when agriculture was pushing for maximum production. He feels that the advice offered by FWAG has helped him achieve what he is doing today: caring for the

environment at the same time as ensuring that the farmer is given control of what happens to his land. In a recent article in the Farmers Guardian, Roger was quoted as saying: “Maybe conservation is the wrong word. The whole of the British countryside is conservation at its best. That is what farmers do without always realising it. For certain, if farmers did not do what they do then pretty soon everywhere would be covered in brambles and scrub.”

Roger also finances research looking at the insect life at Furzy Mount. He is interested in looking at the diversity of species on the farm, and also the potential of ground beetles (Coleoptera: Carabidae) as bio-control agents, the effectiveness of his Tir Gofal options in increasing diversity and the impact of chemical cattle wormers on dung beetles (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae). Surveys carried out in 2006 and 2007 have identified 43 species of insect at Furzy Mount active in the Autumn as well as 58 species of plant, all of which have all been entered into the WWBIC database. An incredible 2084 individual beetles have been trapped at Furzy Mount over a total of 6 days using pitfall traps and dung searching techniques. Of the 16 species of ground beetle identified, many species are of high conservation value and are declining in the UK due to the intensification of agriculture. Recording species such as *Amara communis*, *Amara familiaris* and *Harpalus affinis* at Furzy Mount really does support the fact that Roger’s farming methods are giving these declining species a much-needed refuge. Finding only the third county record of another important agri-environmental indicator species *Amara apricaria* (now on the Pembrokeshire LBAP list) really was the icing on the cake beetle-wise.



The ground beetle (Coleoptera: Carabidae) *Amara apricaria*

With surveys continuing over the coming years, and Roger’s enthusiasm gaining momentum, it will be interesting to see where his interests take him next and what species turn up as a result of his work. As I was driving away from Furzy Mount last week, a barn owl soared overhead – a sure sign that Roger’s passion for the environment is really making its presence known to local wildlife.

Sarah Beynon.