

# Newsletter

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## COUNTRYSIDE

Autumn 2008

### Didn't they do well?!

**As part of their course, first year HND and Foundation Degree Countryside students recently constructed a footbridge across the Afon Melindwr near Goginan.** The log bridge, with stone steps and approach path, is a fine example of partnership and co-operation between the University, the local County Council and landowners.

The bridge, along with a circular walk in the adjacent woodland was built as part of the



Practical Estate Skills module. The project gave students an insight into the difficulties and rewards associated with practical works in the countryside.

## Buttercups



**Staff member Dr John Warren has developed a way of estimating the age of a meadow.** "The idea is simple, and is based on the fact that many plants reproduce vegetatively and by doing so live to great ages," he said. "However, as we all know as things grow old, they tend not to work quite as well as when they were younger. Preliminary research has shown that old buttercups from older pastures are more likely to have extra petals than young buttercup in newly established fields. Therefore looking at the proportion of buttercups in a field with more than five petals may indicate the age of the field (ie tell us when it was last ploughed)."

more seeds, and attract a wider variety of insect species than more static blooms. They observed 300 specially grown flowers of varying stem lengths, recording how much each flower moved in the wind, how often it was visited by insects and for how long, and how many seeds it went on to produce.

## Study tour to Malta

**Just before Easter, second year Tourism Management and Countryside Recreation and Tourism students visited the sunny island of Malta for a week's intensive study tour.** The contrasts between mass and alternative tourism issues were examined. Malta and its undeveloped neighbour Gozo are the ideal locations for these comparisons as the undeveloped island of Gozo lies very close to the mass tourism destination that is Malta. Students developed their Social Science research skills by planning and implementing questionnaires and carrying out in-depth interviews with people from tourism businesses. The days were filled with visits to tourist sites and talking to people involved in managing tourism on the island. It wasn't all work however, as the students also had a day off to explore the island on their own.

## List of Courses

### BSc

Countryside Conservation  
Countryside Management  
Countryside Recreation and Tourism  
Sustainable Rural Development

### Foundation Degree

Countryside Conservation  
Countryside Management  
Countryside Recreation and Tourism

### Higher National Diploma

Countryside Conservation  
Countryside Management  
Countryside Recreation and Tourism

### Interested?

**Phone Fay Hollick** on 01970 - 624471

For details of our courses look at  
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*Students at 'Popeye Village', Malta.*



## Did you know that flowers wave at passing insects?

Aberystwyth scientists Dr John Warren and Penri James have recently discovered that many flowers waft in the breeze, in a hitherto unknown trick used to attract pollinators. The scientists made the discovery while studying common wildflowers known as sea campion. They discovered that fluttering flowers are visited more often by insects, produce

more seeds, and attract a wider variety of insect species than more static blooms. They observed 300 specially grown flowers of varying stem lengths, recording how much each flower moved in the wind, how often it was visited by insects and for how long, and how many seeds it went on to produce.

# Biodiversity and Ecosystem Valuation research.

**Over the past six months, Drs. Mike Christie, Ioan Fazey, and Tony Hyde have been active in their 'Biodiversity and Ecosystem Valuation' research. They have now completed Phase 1 of their Defra-funded project on 'The Economic Valuation of the Benefits of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan'.**

During this Phase, they developed an iterative, participatory knowledge elicitation protocol, which was subsequently used to

elicit expert knowledge/opinion on the levels of change to ecosystem services delivered through the implementation of the UK habitat and species Biodiversity Action Plans. The next stage of the project is to develop a valuation methodology to find out how much the public values these ecosystem services.

Rob Cooper joined the team in March 2008 to work on a new £50,000 Defra-funded project on 'An evaluation of economic and non-economic techniques for assessing the importance of biodiversity to people in developing countries'. The project will use

reviews of the existing literature, as well as in-depth case studies from Rwanda, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Montserrat, Nepal and India. The report, which is due to be published in July 2008, concludes that in order to effectively translate economic valuation techniques to a developing country context, the valuation research methods need to adopt a much more participatory approach. The report highlights the need to develop much more research capacity within developing countries, as it is only through the use of local researchers that local cultural idiosyncrasies will be effectively identified and valued.

## Snowdonia Study Tour



**First year Countryside Recreation and Tourism and Tourism Management students recently spent three days in the Snowdonia National Park.**

Here they studied tourism as an agent of regeneration by comparing the resorts of Colwyn Bay and Llandudno. 'Heritage tourism' was also explored through visits to the National Slate Museum, the Welsh Highland Railway and Harlech Castle. A day of visits in Snowdonia National Park concluded with the highlight – a visit to the fantasy village of Portmeirion.

*Portmeirion village*

## Ecological responses to climate change on Snowdon

First year PhD student Stephanie Pilborough will spend her summer high on Snowdon measuring soil chemistry and recording plant species as part of a new project to assess ecological responses to long term environmental change. Her supervisors represent the "Environmental Change University Partnership": Morag McDonald – SENR, Bangor University, Peter Dennis – IBERs, Aberystwyth University, Chris Evans – CEH, Environment Centre Wales and Clive Walmsley – CCW, Bangor. The project comprises a desk based analysis of physical and biological data collected at the Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) Environmental Change Network site (<http://www.ecn.ac.uk/>) and a repeat survey of soils and vegetation first carried out by the International Biological Programme in the 1960s. The project objective is to identify the relative importance of climate, pollution or land use as drivers of observed changes in mountain soils and vegetation.

## Searching for Ratty

Final year degree students studying the Species Conservation module found that wellies were essential when Environment Agency Biodiversity Officer Hilary Foster took students around two local sites being managed for water voles. The wet grassland and ditches at Glan yr Afon industrial estate and Clarach Bay were part of local Biodiversity Action Plans in Ceredigion to conserve and enhance rare and endangered water vole populations.

## Natur

**Natur** is the name adopted by the newly created Welsh Institute of Countryside and Conservation Management. This organisation seeks to facilitate and promote career development and training opportunities for countryside and conservation professionals. As the major teaching establishments in this area in Wales we are closely linked with Natur's development, with staff member Ian Keirle on the Executive Committee and the Education Committee.

## The race is on

A group of IBERs students will be spending two weeks this summer working at the National Botanic Gardens in a race to make Wales the first country in the world to barcode its flora. In future it will be possible to identify any plant found in Wales by looking at its DNA - but without being an expert botanist.

## Students visit the Med!

**How can global issues in conservation be assessed without leaving the UK?**

Simple - visit the Mediterranean biomes in the Great Glasshouse at the National Botanic Gardens Wales – the largest single span glasshouse in the world. Students wandered through unique plants from South Africa, Australia, California, Chile, the Canary Islands and the Mediterranean Basin, all under one roof, with NBGW Education Officer Trevor Roach providing an insight into the Garden's work and the coordination of ex-situ plant conservation around the world.



*The Great Glass House of the National Botanic Gardens*