

# Countryside and Environment

[www.aber.ac.uk/en/ibers](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/ibers)

## NEWSLETTER

2013

**IBERS** Institute of Biological,  
Environmental and Rural Sciences

## Aberystwyth University is TOPS for Student Satisfaction

Aberystwyth University is, for the sixth year running considered the tops when it comes to student satisfaction, according to the *The Times Good University Guide 2013*.

With a **student satisfaction rating of 83%** Aberystwyth University is among the top 10 UK universities for student satisfaction, which highlights the **excellence found at Aberystwyth for the student experience**.

## Migration marathon for Dyfi Osprey Chick

Thanks to information provided through a solar-powered GPS tracker sponsored by IBERS, researchers have confirmed that the Dyfi osprey chick named Ceulan has completed his migration to West Africa. The transmitter, which is sending regular location and flight pattern data back to IBERS' researchers, shows that Ceulan has settled in Senegal and is fishing along the Senegal River. He took just under two weeks to complete his 2,953 mile journey from the Dyfi Estuary near Aberystwyth. The trackers used in the project have an operational life of approximately five years, allowing IBERS researchers to follow the birds during several annual migrations between their summer breeding territories in Wales and their wintering grounds in West Africa. The trackers provide invaluable and cutting-edge information about osprey ecology and migration that will ultimately aid in the birds conservation and recovery in Wales and beyond.



*Monty the Osprey, father of the chick*

## What do you do when a Leopard gets on your bus?

A recent talk on human / wildlife conflicts in Mumbai, India presented some interesting conservation conundrums. Dr Shivaji Chavan, ex-manager of WWF India Tiger Landscapes Programme talked about a National Park located in the centre of the Indian city of Mumbai, where there is a population of Leopards. These hunt at night in the surrounding city finding cats and dogs easy prey! As you can imagine this causes considerable problems as the Leopard is protected and cannot be killed. However, many people have been killed by the Leopards! Dr Shivaji presented the techniques that are being used to try and rectify this challenging situation.

## List of Courses

### BSc

Countryside Conservation  
Countryside Management  
Ecology  
Environmental Bioscience

### Foundation Degree

Countryside Management and  
Conservation

### Interested?

Phone **Ian Keirle** on **01970 621636**

## Ring Ouzel research in Morocco



*The Ring Ouzel (Turdus torquatus)*

Countryside staff member Ian Keirle has recently had the results of research into the habitat associations and winter distribution of the Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*) published in the journal *British Birds*. This is the output of three research expeditions to the Atlas Mountains in Morocco where systematic survey work was carried out to ascertain what kind of habitat Ring Ouzels favoured. The findings indicated a dependence on Juniper berries and a requirement to be close to sources of water. Ring Ouzels breed in the UK but their numbers are in serious decline. This study sought to find out what happened to them where they winter. The research work will continue.

## Student photographic competition



The winning image in the wildlife and environment category from Lisa Clancy

In 2012 IBERS launched its first student photographic competition. Over 400 entries gave the judges quite a headache in picking winners, as there were some stunning entries. There were four categories – farming, wildlife and environment, science and research and student life. The winning images are now proudly displayed on the walls of the IBERS.

## UK Biodiversity Science Committee

Congratulations to Peter Dennis, one of the IBERS staff, who has recently been appointed as Secretary of the newly established UK Biodiversity Science Committee. The UK BSC has been formed to engage with the science community to advance the promotion of biodiversity science as a contribution to national and international science programmes. The committee is supported by the Royal Society of London Global Environmental Research Committee which promotes and coordinates UK participation in global environmental research programmes.

## Bioblitz!

As part of plans to designate the University campus as a Nature Reserve, a one day BIOBLITZ survey is to take place to identify and list all of the species of plants, animals, microbes, fungi and every living thing inhabiting the university grounds. This will take place on the 11<sup>th</sup> May and will involve IBERS staff and students. We will be helped in our challenge by volunteers from lots of local groups including RSPB, horticultural societies, bat groups and local schools. BBC Wales are hoping to cover the event as our species count increases.

## Surveying the birds on campus

Year 1 students recently carried out a bird survey of the University campus. Findings confirmed that the most commonly observed bird species on the Aberystwyth campus is the Herring Gull. This coastal species is also an opportunist and sees the large buildings as cliffs for nesting. The good news is that they also observed red kites, buzzards and a large list of other species. Sporadically, the bird numbers were boosted by the very large flocks of starlings that roost in winter beneath Aberystwyth's pier.

## Student led teaching awards

For the first time in 2012 students across all departments in Aberystwyth University got to vote in the Guild of Students "Student Led Teaching Awards". IBERS picked up more awards than did any other department, include best use of technology in teaching, best tutor, best department, and the Innovative Teaching award. Countryside staff member Dr John Warren was runner-up in the innovative / creative teaching award.



## Ozone boost for wild berries

Aberystwyth ecologist Dr Dylan Gwynn-Jones has found out that increasing levels of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>

and ultra violet radiation (UV) may provide unexpected benefits to wild berry species according to a study in the Swedish sub-arctic. Such berries are an important food harvest for the people of Northern Europe during late summer and autumn. They also represent a vital source of nutrition to birds at high latitudes.

In findings from a 20 year experiment just published in the journal *Ambio*, the team discovered that when plants were exposed to a combination of enhanced UV and elevated CO<sub>2</sub>, the antioxidant content of bilberries (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) increased, together with the quantities of berries produced. UV radiation also increased levels of seed fertility. It is believed that enhanced UV radiation produces 'stress responses' in wild bilberries, which drives the plants to put more energy into reproduction. Elevated CO<sub>2</sub> may actually promote this process as more carbon is available from photosynthesis.

## Study tours

Countryside students have been off on their travels again. Trips away from University form an important part of the courses and provide great learning opportunities and a chance to integrate material gleaned in the classroom. Year one students spent a week in Shropshire, based at the Field Studies Council Preston Montford study centre. Here a variety of landscapes and habitats were visited to consider the formation of the landscape and the development of the diverse habitats that make up the countryside. Year 3 students went either to the 'Burren' in Ireland where they studied the botanic biodiversity of this fabulous limestone area, or stayed in Wales where a week of visits to sites around the country compared and contrasted a variety of sites and management issues.



Students studying the management of the Cwm Idwal National Nature Reserve in Snowdonia