

Eycott Hill Nature Reserve

Newsletter

ISSUE
#1



It's been a very successful year at Eycott Hill Nature Reserve. In April we were able to complete the purchase of the site, thank you to our generous members for their help and to our funders and supporters; the Heritage Lottery Fund, WREN, Cumbria Waste Management Environment Trust, the Garfield Weston Foundation, Natural England, the Banister Charitable Trust, and the Esme Fairbairn Foundation, we couldn't have done it without your support.

We also started delivering restoration and access work and events as part of a five-year project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and WREN's Biodiversity Action Fund.

Read on for some of the highlights from year one and to find out what we've got planned for 2016.



Coronation Meadows

As the first Coronation Meadow receptor site in Cumbria we were delighted with the survey results from land restored in 2014. Extensive areas were covered with yellow rattle and red clover, and eye-bright, rough hawkbit, pignut and meadow buttercup were abundant, along with grass species such as sweet vernal-grass, smooth meadow grass and crested dog's-tail.

This is a fantastic result after only one year of restoration work. Volunteers received training in survey methodology and wildflower/grass ID and put these skills to use by helping with the survey.

During the summer of 2015 we restored another two hectares of upland hay meadow by power

harrowing the land, spreading green hay from the donor site at Piper Hole, near Kirkby Stephen, and planting over 3,000 wildflower plugs. We will be restoring another four hectares next year and surveying again in early July 2016 as part of our ongoing monitoring work.

Look out for opportunities to get involved on the website.

Discovery Day 2015

We were delighted to welcome more than 100 visitors to our annual Discovery Day on the 27th June.

Expert speakers included:
David Clarke – Dragonflies
Steve Doyle – Butterflies
Dave Blackedge – Spiders
Keith Watson – Wetland plants

All of the guided walks were well attended and storyteller Ian Douglas and face painter Janet Allen helped to keep all ages entertained.



Wild about art!

October was the start of a fantastic partnership with Prism Arts, a charity based in Carlisle dedicated to providing accessible art activities for all.

It's a wonderful opportunity to make the nature reserve accessible to people who may not have visited a Cumbria Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve before and to help them to enjoy the wildlife and wild places of Cumbria.

The first workshop programme involved 122 primary school children from St. Herbert's in Keswick, Greystoke, and Penruddock.

After inspirational site visits that included mini beast hunts, nature

rubbings of volcanic rock, and exciting local folklore stories (amongst other things!) the children got to work illustrating and writing their own stories about Eycott Hill Nature Reserve.

They also made puppets of the main characters to be used in animations created by a group of learning disabled adults from the Edington Centre in Penrith. An exhibition is planned for Spring 2016.

To quote one happy customer from St. Herbert's School in Keswick:

"Best school trip EVER!"



BBC Look North Filming Coronation Meadows

University of Cumbria work placement

Rowena Hargill, studying for a BSC in Animal Conservation Science at the University of Cumbria, joined us in July for a nine month work placement. She been a brilliant help at work parties and is also working on some fabulous resources for children and school groups.

As well as practical experience she has also completed training courses to help her identify birds and meadow plants. Read about her placement on the Eycott Hill blog at www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/blog.



Press coverage

We've generated an amazing 40 pieces of press coverage in the first year alone. BBC Look North and ITV Border broadcast television interviews about the purchase of the site on the evening news at the beginning of the project and we welcomed BBC Look North again in August to cover the Coronation Meadows restoration.

Northern Reserves Officer Kevin Scott appeared on Countryfile in April and was interviewed for BBC Radio 4's Farming Today in June.

Local newspapers and BBC Radio Cumbria have been very supportive and look out for our regular column in Penrith Today.

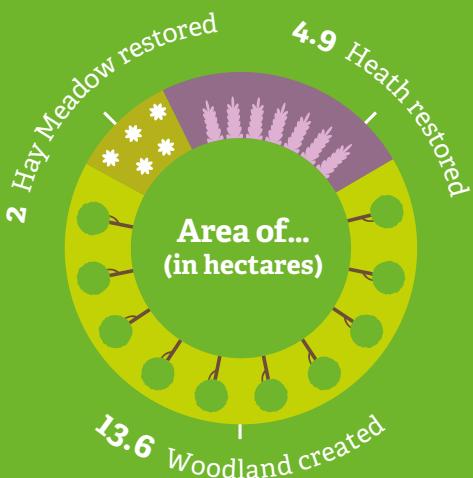


Tree planting

Volunteers and contractors have planted an amazing 7500 trees this year. Species planted include oak, birch, aspen, bird cherry, alder, mountain ash, hazel, hawthorn, holly, willow, and juniper.



Nature Reserve work in numbers



Did you know

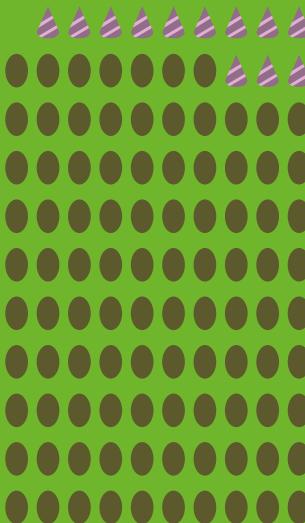
1 Hectare is equal to 10,000 m²

3000 Wildflower plugs



7500 Trees

12 Work Parties



Length of...(m)

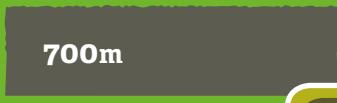
Grip blocking completed



Fencing built



Drystone wall repaired



Hedgerow planted



One footbridge added

Want to get involved?

Visit www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/whats-on for events and volunteering opportunities.

All volunteers welcome, no previous experience necessary!



Conservation grazing

Hardy native Luing cattle have been grazing the nature reserve for most of the year in all weathers. The herd of 16 suckler cows with calves are owned by our partner organisation Newton Rigg College. Their non-selective grazing makes the habitat more varied and therefore better for insects, voles, mice, birds and wild flowers. Over the five-year project Newton Rigg College will manage the herd to produce high quality beef in a low input, low output system that we expect to be cost-effective and produce multiple environmental outcomes.

Students from Newton Rigg College will help to look after the cattle and learn about upland farming with native breeds through site visits and practical work experience. A total of 103 students have visited the nature reserve so far while studying for a Diploma in Agriculture or Countryside Management.

The Buxton Agricultural Discussion Group and Pasture Fed Livestock Association have also visited to look at the cattle grazing.

We will be looking for volunteers in 2016 to help us check on the cattle. This would involve visiting the nature reserve once a week to report on their condition and whereabouts and letting us know about any damage to boundary walls and fences. Full training will be given by the Grazing Advisory Partnership to help you learn how to behave around livestock and what signs to be aware of to ensure they are grazing in a safe environment.

Heath restoration

Contractors have worked to restore around 5ha of dwarf shrub heath to add to the habitat diversity of the nature reserve by creating bare ground and then introducing seed of species such as heather, bilberry, cowberry and crowberry. Once established the heath will benefit ground nesting birds and pollinating insects and provide a seed source to expand the area of this habitat on the nature reserve. The change to a more extensive grazing regime using cattle, not sheep, has already resulted in a remarkable recovery of dwarf shrub heath across the nature reserve.



Fencing and dry stone walling

Over 700m of dry stone wall has been restored and 1200m of fencing is now in place to help manage livestock on the reserve. Hedgerows planted with species including hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, crab apple, and oak will create valuable habitats for wildlife.



Car park

Carlisle based Story Contracting have completed work on a small car park to make the nature reserve more accessible and to reduce congestion on the road. There is space for up to 10 cars and cycle parking.



Grip blocking

Narrow artificial drainage channels on the nature reserve have been dammed to improve and maintain wetland habitats and to create wet flushes that are rich in Sphagnum moss and sedge species. They will also help to slow the flow of water in the uplands keeping the water supply cleaner and helping to alleviate flooding.

2016 Events:

More than 200 visitors joined us for guided walks in 2015. We have lots happening in 2016 too!

February

Thursday, 17th 10:00 – 16:00
Conservation work party

March

Wednesday, 9th 10:00 – 16:00
Conservation work party

Thursday, 24th 11:00 – 14:00
British Cycling Guided Bike Ride from Greystoke

Wednesday, 30th 13:00 – 15:30
A wild family adventure (for children aged 6 – 12)

April

Monday, 4th & Tuesday, 5th
09:30 – 16:30
Skills course -Introduction to identifying lichens

Thursday, 7th 10:00 – 16:00
Conservation work party

Friday, 15th 10:00 – 13:00
British Cycling Guide Bike Ride from Greystoke

Tuesday, 26th 10:30 – 12:30
Guided walk

Wednesday, 27th 10:30 – 16:30
Skills course - Introduction to identifying Sphagnum species

May

Saturday, 7th 10:00 – 16:00
Write in nature – creative writing workshop with Geraldine Green

Saturday, 15th 10:00 – 15:00
Macro photography workshop with Andrew Heptinstall

June

Saturday, 25th Family Discovery Day

Contact

Jody Ferguson
Eycott Hill Communications and Events Officer
01228 829578
jodyf@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk



SIGN UP

Sign up to our email newsletter for the latest news, events, training and volunteer opportunities
www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/eycott-hill



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