

# Eycott Hill Nature Reserve

## Final Newsletter

ISSUE  
#5



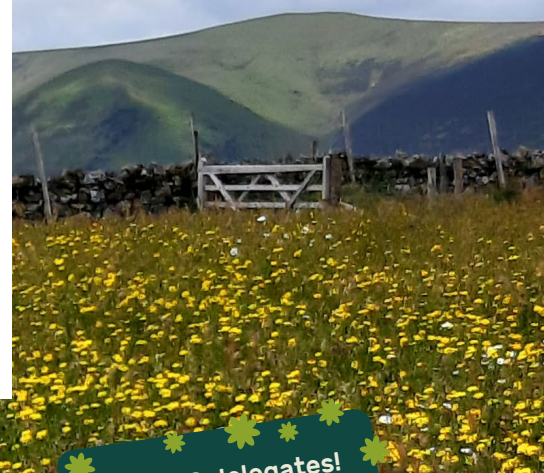
Cumbria  
Wildlife Trust

**During the last 21-months of the Eycott Hill project we have worked in partnership with Prism Arts to organise an outdoor theatre performance, delivered education sessions, surveyed habitats and hosted an Uplands for Everyone Conference.**

Over the duration of the project we have planted 10,150 trees, restored six hectares of hay meadows, volunteers have contributed over 1,200 days of volunteering, delivered 47 skills courses to over 500 people, reached over 1,200 people with 173 art workshops and over 28,000 people have visited Eycott Hill Nature Reserve.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered, attended an event, taken part in a skills course or visited the nature reserve. Thank you to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, those who made a personal donation and to all our grant funders who, collectively, made the purchase of Eycott Hill Nature Reserve and the whole project possible.

Although this marks the end of a wonderful project, Cumbria Wildlife Trust will continue to look after Eycott Hill Nature Reserve. We are excited to see how it will develop over many years to come and we hope everyone continues to enjoy this spectacular place.



Over 180 delegates!

## Uplands for Everyone Conference 2020

**On Thursday 13 February 2020 we held our Uplands for Everyone Conference at Roundthorn Country House, Penrith.**

The sell-out event hosted over 180 delegates, including farmers, conservationists, representatives from organisations across the country, Cumbria Wildlife Trust members and the general public.

The conference highlighted the work that the Trust has done at Eycott Hill Nature Reserve and how, through a collaborative programme of restorative,

low-input farming, habitat restoration and people engagement, this special place has been put into natural recovery for everyone's benefit.

Tony Juniper CBE, Chair of Natural England, headlined the conference and spoke about the importance of a partnership-based, holistic approach to environmental recovery. Tony emphasised that now is a moment of fundamental change for land managers, especially within the context of climate change and wildlife emergencies.

It was a real privilege to have Tony speak at our conference, sharing his insights and vision for the future.

The day continued with excellent talks from Chris Clark, Sam and Claire Beaumont, David Renwick, Ali McCaw and Kate Gascoyne. The afternoon session included a fantastic panel discussion about public goods, chaired by Caz Graham with Julia Aglionby, David Harpley, Simon Humphries, Candida Hodgson and Sam Hodgson.



Prism Arts partnership project work on display.



Sam and Claire Beaumont from Gowbarrow Hall Farm, Ullswater.



## The Hill of Dreams

**The Hill of Dreams outdoor theatre performance in June 2019 was a celebration of the four-year partnership between Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Prism Arts.**

Eycott Hill Nature Reserve was transformed as more than 120 performers shared tales of tropical seas, legends of battling giants, warnings about mischievous faeries, stories of volcanic eruptions and the adventures of intrepid explorers.

Children from Braithwaite CofE Primary School, Distington Community School, Greystoke Primary School, Penruddock Primary School, St Catherine's Catholic Primary School,

adults from the Edington Centre and Prism Arts Studio Theatre group wrote and performed the pieces with the support of professional artists from Prism Arts.

The stories performed were inspired by the natural heritage of Eycott Hill Nature Reserve including its wildlife, geology and folklore.

CanO Water kindly supported the event with canned water to keep the performers happy and hydrated during the event while helping to minimise the use of single-use plastic bottles.

Greystoke Primary School and the Edington Centre performing 'The Ballad of Penrith Pete' © Prism Arts



## Wildlife surveys bring exciting news

**During the last 12 months of the Eycott Hill project we've been overjoyed by the findings of recent surveys for both fish and invertebrates.**

In September 2019, Atlantic salmon were recorded in Naddles Beck after an electrofishing survey was carried out by West Cumbria Rivers Trust. Eleven individuals were recorded at the surveying sites in 2019, a significant increase from 2015 when no salmon were recorded. Alongside the Atlantic salmon, brown trout, stoneloach, minnow and stickleback were also present in Naddles Beck.

The sites that tended to show larger increases in both salmonids and overall fish numbers were those that had received more management during the duration of the project. It's fantastic to see fish doing better in the becks around Eycott Hill, which hopefully means the quality of freshwater habitat is improving. This shows how important it is to improve habitat connectivity and restore our river habitats to a high quality.

More recently, an invertebrate survey was carried out which revealed that a single marsh fritillary butterfly was observed in wetland vegetation.

Excitingly, this could indicate the possibility of this species naturally colonising the reserve from one of the re-introduction sites in Cumbria. The survey also revealed an increase in pollinators in the hay meadows, with records of bilberry bumblebees and impressive numbers of sawfly and hoverfly species. There is also a healthy population of chimney sweeper moths, a day-flying species that likes tall, flower-rich grasslands with pignut. There remains a very strong and thriving population of small pearl-bordered fritillaries, which appear to be increasing in numbers on the reserve.

Aquatic invertebrates have clearly benefited from the creation of ponds near the hay meadows and along Naddles Beck on the west side of the reserve. There are now eight species of dragonfly breeding on the reserve,

with the most exciting being the broad-bodied chaser, which is spreading northwards but still considered rare in Cumbria.

These results are truly wonderful and show the impact of the habitat restoration works which have taken place throughout the project.



A male broad-bodied chaser dragonfly © David Clarke.

## Belted Galloway cattle

**On the first of June 2019 we welcomed the arrival of the Belted Galloway herd which is owned by James and Eleanor Irving from Stockdale Farm, near Wigton.**

Belted Galloways are a hardy, native breed and a brilliant tool for land management. They are perfectly adapted to cope with the harsh Cumbrian weather and they stay out on the reserve all year round. There are currently 30 adult cattle on the nature reserve.

The herd demonstrates a method of low-input, low-output hill farming that produces a high-quality beef product while benefitting the environment.

During the spring and early summer of 2020 the herd has seen the arrival of 12 calves, which have settled in well and are grazing the open fell. Twix, the Belted Galloway bull, has run with the herd over late summer so we are expecting more new arrivals from May 2021.

The herd is checked daily by a team of volunteer cattle checkers and members of the Irving family. We can't thank the volunteers enough for their support, communication and providing crucial information to both the reserve staff and the Irving family.



## Education

**In 2019, students visited Eycott Hill Nature Reserve to take part in a broad range of educational opportunities.**

Practical and surveying tasks have contributed to the achievement of John Muir Awards, A-Levels in Geography, and Level 3 Diplomas in both Agriculture and Animal Management.

We've continued to work with Newton Rigg College. 30 agriculture students and 32 animal management students learnt about conservation grazing and habitat management outdoors in an uplands landscape.

In partnership with Field Studies Council Blencathra, we ran several practical conservation days in May for 121 primary school children who were completing their John Muir Awards. The students helped with practical tasks, lots of bracken bashing, weeding numerous trees and testing the water quality of our ponds.

A-Level geographers from Austin Friars and Queen Elizabeth Grammar School carried out fieldwork as part of their courses. The hay meadows and bogs provided the ideal venue to sample biodiversity and peat depth.

In March, 13 students studying Wildlife Media at the University of Cumbria captured the wonderful wildlife at the nature reserve on film.

Lastly, in 2020 final-year graphic design students at the University of Cumbria completed a project all about the Natural Capital assessment of Eycott Hill Nature Reserve. The students interpreted the report and designed banners, booklets, models and even an animated film. The best design was displayed at the Uplands for Everyone Conference in February.

Wildlife Media students from the University of Cumbria.



## Thank you to our wonderful volunteers

289 volunteer days!

**In 2019 and 2020 an amazing 289 volunteer days were given to Eycott Hill Nature Reserve.**

Our brilliant volunteers have done tremendous work on the nature reserve including: repairing dry stone walls; controlling bracken; fixing gate latches; monitoring habitats and species; installing a volunteer tool box; checking and weeding hundreds of trees; ensuring the water monitoring equipment at Naddles Beck is cattle proof; and even a celebratory lunch for The National Lottery's 25th birthday!

Volunteers have also helped at our events, from *The Hill of Dreams* outdoor theatre performance to our bi-annual Discovery Days, sharing knowledge and enthusiasm with visitors of all ages.

We couldn't have achieved nearly as much without all of our excellent volunteers so thank you!



## Events

Thank you to everyone who came along to our events in 2019 and 2020.

People created fantastic pastel landscapes inspired by Eycott Hill, learned to identify fungi, flowers, moths and lichens, and improved practical skills. We've had family fun days, guided walks, training events, creative workshops, an uplands conference and more.

More than 790 people took part in an event in 2019 and 2020. It was lovely to meet everyone and we thank you for supporting Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the Eycott Hill project.

790 attendees!



Jess helping to repair a dry stone wall.

## Super placement students

**Jess Cowburn joined the Eycott Hill project in June 2019 for a 10-month sandwich placement before returning to the University of Cumbria to complete the final year of her zoology degree.**

Jess helped the staff and volunteers in all areas of work including conservation tasks and events at Eycott Hill, from mammal surveys to playing a ladybird at *The Hill of Dreams* outdoor theatre performance.

Jess completed her first aid training, quad bike handling course, cattle checking course, and learnt how to identify fungi, grass and flowers. She was a valuable member of the northern team – her continuous help in all weathers and always with a smile was truly wonderful.

William Tams joined us during the summer of 2019 for a voluntary work experience placement a break from studying his Biosciences degree at the University of Durham. Will helped out with bracken bashing, monitoring invertebrates, surveying wildlife and the hay meadows.

We thank Jess and Will for their hard work throughout their placements and we wish them all the best for their futures.



## New access for people

**A brand new Public Right of Way from the Mungrisdale road on to Eycott Hill Nature Reserve has been installed by the Lake District National Park Authority.**

This has seen the construction of two additional footbridges, funded by the Lake District Ramblers' Association and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, on the west side of the nature reserve to enable access over Naddles Beck.

We have installed new interpretation panels welcoming visitors at this side of the reserve and provided information on the wildlife in the pools and wetland areas. Finally, we've waymarked a path to the summit of Eycott Hill allowing visitors to follow a route through the uneven and boggy ground.

This is the first official and guaranteed access to what was the largest open access island in the Lake District National Park. We thank the local landowners for their cooperation and we hope local residents and visitors enjoy the new footpath.



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