

# Green Holidays in Wales

April 2013

Wildlife

Issue 3



Male Sparrowhawk at Gwaenynog Farmhouse B&B  
[www.gwaenynog.com](http://www.gwaenynog.com)

Mid Wales is surrounded by beautiful places for nature to thrive and enthrall us. With the Berwyn and Cambrian Mountains to the north and west, the Brecon Beacons to the south and the amazing Offa's Dyke to the east, we're surrounded by some of the most wonderful, scenic areas which are relatively untouched, and seldom visited.



A Blue tit on the feeder at Gwaenynog Farmhouse B&B  
[www.gwaenynog.com](http://www.gwaenynog.com)



Lots of members of **Green Holidays in Wales** are great walkers and cyclists, but we're also great naturalists – and can tell you some of the places you can visit to appreciate the best of what Mid Wales has to offer.

We hope you like our latest newsletter and that it will help you to make the most of your next stay in lovely Mid Wales.

Green Holidays in Wales is a friendly group of holiday accommodation providers and other tourism businesses, dotted throughout Mid Wales, working together to become more sustainable.

Our aim is to provide a diverse range of enjoyable and affordable green eco holidays for visitors to the region. At the same time we are reducing the impacts our businesses have, both in the local environment and in the wider world.

For even more info about us, go to [www.greenholidaysinwales.co.uk](http://www.greenholidaysinwales.co.uk)



Rose Cottage is in a unique place to see wildlife. It is situated on the bank of the river Teme, which is itself an SSSI, and adjacent to woodland and to open farmland. Beacon Hill nature reserve is across the lane, and there are several other reserves nearby.

We have spent the last 10 years encouraging wildlife close to the cottage, with regular feeding and by creating habitats and nesting sites. The gardens are managed organically.

Close by are several nature reserves: just across the lane is Beacon Hill reserve, an upland heather moor with many interesting plants, and birds including merlin and peregrine. Tylcau Hill and Rhos Fiddle are a bit further away, or see the Wildlife Trust websites for Radnorshire, Montgomeryshire and Shropshire, for more.

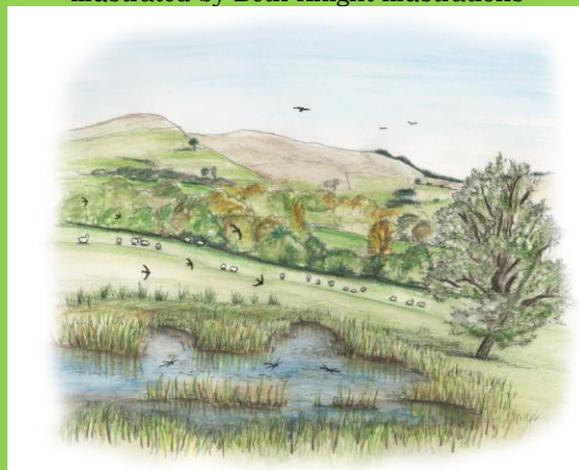
Our project for 2013 is to build a wildlife observation room at Rose Cottage, designed to provide a warm comfortable room with large windows overlooking the garden, river, woodland, and adjacent farmland. Visitors will be able to enjoy our rich diversity of wildlife in comfort. The room should be finished by May 2013, ready for our summer's visitors.

**For more information see**  
[www.rosecottageutlas.com](http://www.rosecottageutlas.com)

## Farm Wildlife and Nature Trails

The Pugh family of the Lôn Farm and Lôn Lodges, Nantmel, Nr. Rhayader, have developed two Farm Walks and Nature Trails on their farm in Radnorshire, with help from the Activity and Wildlife Tourism fund offered by "Sustainable Tourism Powys".

Visiting guests who stay at the Lodges and walking groups can now follow a printed guide, which explains the wildlife and natural habitat along the Trails. Richard Knight, of Rhayader by Nature, provided a wealth of information on the birds, wild herbs and native trees along the routes and the leaflets have been designed and illustrated by Beth Knight Illustrations



[www.bethknightillustration.co.uk](http://www.bethknightillustration.co.uk)

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust has provided information on heritage sites, including a Roman marching camp site and an Iron age hill fort site along the paths. The guide aims to give an overall awareness for walking guests, including information and illustrations on the farm's sheep and cattle breeds. Access has been improved with the creation of gateways, bridges and resting places, positioned for walkers to pause and admire the natural beauty of the landscape and the wildlife.

Speaking on behalf of Lôn Lodges, Kerena Pugh said "It has been such a worthwhile project. Guests and visitors can now learn about the local wildlife, habitats and historical value of the land. The provision of a car-free activity from the doorstep is beneficial to everyone and the environment and we are working alongside other businesses in the Rhayader and Mid Wales area promoting sustainable tourism and wildlife holidays.

The walks are available for walking groups and schools by contacting Kerena on Mobile 07929539874. For farm safety reasons, an appointment is required. Please get in touch for more information [www.lonlodges.co.uk](http://www.lonlodges.co.uk)

### The Wildlife Centre for Wales

The town of Rhayader and the surrounding area of outstanding natural beauty is being promoted as "The Wildlife Centre of Wales". With so much to offer the wildlife enthusiast, this rugged landscape is home to many species of flora and fauna. Information on the area and walks available can be found on [www.rhayader.co.uk](http://www.rhayader.co.uk)

This area is well known for the British Red Kite, now saved from near extinction. The Red Kite has become one of the greatest bird protection stories of our time and they can be seen every day at the Gigrin Farm Feeding Station on the outskirts of Rhayader. For more information visit [www.gigrin.co.uk](http://www.gigrin.co.uk)

The kite is not the only species to have found sanctuary in the hills, polecats and otters, buzzards and ravens, ancient oak and man himself found safety here. The landscape is full of history waiting to be read - 400 million year old fossils from a prehistoric sea, burial mounds of the Bronze Age, Roman forts, castles and mediaeval settlements. The area is well recognized for its natural history interest. Designated a Special Protection Area under the EEC Bird Directive it is among the most important areas for birds in Europe. Of particular interest are the breeding birds of prey, grouse, waders, river birds and the assemblages of breeding migrants from Africa such as redstarts, pied flycatchers, wood warblers, whinchats, wheatears and ring ouzels.

Extensive tracts of countryside are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) for the richness, diversity and rarity of the wildlife. Particularly important are the habitats of the moorlands, bogs, ancient woodlands, hay meadows and river systems.



Canolfan Byd Natur Cymru  
The Wildlife Centre of Wales

### Walk Rhayader/Gilfach Nature Reserve

Approximate distance: 9 miles  
OS Explorer Map:200

This is a brief outline of the walk, detailed directions with OS map coordinates can be obtained from Guidfa House.

Starting at the bridge over the River Wye in Rhayader, the walk first takes you along the B4518 towards The Elan Valley following signs for Aberystwyth Mountain Road up onto Cwmdeuddwr Common. Views from the top of the ridge are outstanding, with the Cambrian Mountains to the west and the Wye Valley to the south. On the top of Esgair Dderw is an impressive Bronze Age standing stone.

It then heads to Nannerth Fawr Farm, which is a traditional 200 acre Welsh Hill Farm in the Wye Valley and has some spectacular views and is a haven for birds and wildlife. Then it heads towards the Gilfach Nature Reserve, a 410 acre hill farm owned and managed by Radnorshire Wildlife Trust. The reserve has up to 1,300 species and is renowned for its broad-leaved woodland, birds, lichen and leaping salmon in the autumn.

Next it heads along the road, following the signs for Nature Trail and Monk's Trod. The old railway line now provides excellent habitat for wildlife, particularly glow worms who relish the old chippings and owls and bats that live inside the tunnels.

After a time, you will reach a deep pool, next to a small waterfall with some remarkable rock formations - which have been carved out by the river - this is the Sheep dip, where local farmers used to wash their sheep. Then, under a giant oak, towards a clearing until you reach an impressive waterfall on the right of the field with a viewing platform. Continue on towards the visitors centre passing a large wooden otter hide on the way. At the top of a winding road you'll arrive at the old farmyard containing a visitor centre and a stunning 15<sup>th</sup> century Welsh longhouse, fully restored by the wildlife trust's volunteers.

Above and behind the longhouse towards the hills above, there is a large gate which marks the edge of the reserve and you will then follow the Wye Valley Walk up the hill - you will be rewarded with some of the best views, looking down towards the Wye Valley, where you can often spot birds of prey soaring in the thermals above. You'll also get a good view of the winding road you walked up earlier, through the nature reserve.

Follow the fence line through farm fields back towards Rhayader looking out over the hills to the east where the Monk's Trod route winds its way towards Abbey Cwm Hir. After continuing, you will reach a wooden signpost for Gilfach Nature Reserve and Rhayader. You then head back into town.

For the detailed route and more information, contact [www.guidfahouse.co.uk](http://www.guidfahouse.co.uk)



**The bird feeders at Yr Hen Stablau are attractive to all!**  
[www.selfcateringcottagewales.co.uk](http://www.selfcateringcottagewales.co.uk)

### *Highlights in spring*

Ynyshir is on the Dyfi estuary and in spring there are breeding waders, including redshanks and lapwings and wildfowl, such as shovelers, teals and mallards. You may see woodland breeding birds including pied flycatchers, redstarts and wood warblers and birds of prey such as peregrines and red kites. Take a walk in the oak woodland to enjoy the carpet of spring flowers.



The reserve is open from dawn to dusk. The visitor centre is open daily 9 am-5 pm from April to October and 10 am-4 pm from November to March (closed Mondays and Tuesdays). Free for members. For non-members - £5 adult, £2.50 child, £10 family. Information for families: brass rubbing trail; children's activity rucksacks to borrow. No dogs allowed, except registered assistance dogs

The reserve is near Eglwys-fach, between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth train stations. There is a regular bus service that stops in Eglwys-fach and then walk one mile to the reserve. By bicycle or car turn off the A487 by the church in Eglwys-fach.

**Further information available at:**  
[www.selfcateringcottagewales.co.uk](http://www.selfcateringcottagewales.co.uk)

There are some wonderful areas for watching wildlife, particularly at RSPB sites in an around Mid Wales.

One of note is Lake Vyrnwy. There are hides all over the estate and footpaths around the lake – some are quite a hike from the car parks, but they're worth the extra effort – not many people head there, but those that do are rewarded for their efforts. Its peaceful and you can see some wonderful wildlife. From Peregrines in their nests, to polecats and badgers (OK, they're mostly at night) but you would be very unlucky to see nothing.

Getting to Lake Vyrnwy is easy, just follow the signs to either Llanfyllin, or look out for the brown signs. Car parking is free, so there's no excuse.

And whilst you're there, you can have an ice cream in the café, hire a bike to go around the lake, or just take one of the many paths which are marked – from easy level routes of just a mile or two, through to more challenging 5.5 miles taking you up the hills that surround the lake. Or combine a couple for additional experiences. Alternatively you can walk around the lake its only 12 miles!

For more information, or for special events put on by the RSPB, head to <http://www.lake-vyrnwy.com/>



So, to come and stay anywhere in Mid Wales or to receive future newsletters, please go and sign-up at our website [www.greenholidaysinwales.co.uk](http://www.greenholidaysinwales.co.uk)

