

WILDLIFE ON YOUR PATCH

Broad Haven Slash Ponds



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Introduction

Broad Haven Environment Group hosted the Wildlife on Your Patch walk around Broad Haven Slash Ponds in July 2008. The walk linked experts with local community members and interested parties from the Broad Haven Community. This short report highlights some of the more obvious, interesting or rare species that we found and looks at the main types of habitats present on the site.

The Slash pond is a former culm pit which has filled with water creating the pond which has gently sloping edges with a small section of reedbed to the west exit of the pond. To the north the bank is steeper and has scrubbed over with woody species which spread over the gentler east slope of the pond where there is also a small section of reedbed. To the northwest of the slash pond there is a section of meadow grassland with occasional trees grading to scrub further up the bank. This diversity of habitats support a wide range of species and these are a key component of the wildlife interest of the site.

In 2003 the Haven's development Trust was awarded a Cydcoed grant of £28,000 to improve the access around the board walk and improve biodiversity on the site. The route of our walk followed the board walk from the car park to the west of the pond.

Site visit – details of where we went and what we found. A full species list for the site can be found at the end of the report.

As we organised ourselves and gathered equipment we paused to listen to the bird song we could here from the car park. In the surrounding gardens we could hear house sparrows chattering in the hedgerows, house martins flew over head feeding and calling, magpies squawking and blackbirds preparing for their evening song. Entering the slash ponds on the gravel path we walked passed hawthorn and ash trees that were planted as part of the project in 2003.



House Sparrow

From the waters edge we could see the common reed close up this has a beautiful purple flower and looks stunning in evening light particularly in the autumn. Close to the board walk there were willow trees which form good shelter

for birds visiting the ponds to drink. The lichens on the trees are very impressive, they indicate that the air quality is good.



Usnea spp & *Ramalina* spp.

Lichens are mutualistic associations of a fungus and an alga or cyanobacterium and occur as crusty patches or bushy growths on trees, rocks and bare ground. Lichens are very sensitive to sulphur dioxide pollution in the air; shrubby, hairy and leafy lichens tend to be the most sensitive for example *Ramalina*, *Usnea* and *Lobaria* species. These are often confined to the parts of Britain with the purest air such as Pembrokeshire. The boardwalk and railings have already got good lichen growth on the wood even though it was only installed 5 years ago.



From the boardwalk we could hear willow warblers singing in the reedbed to the west of the slash pond, these are often confused with chiffchaff. A gold crest and pair of bullfinch were seen flying amid the blackthorn. Amongst the common reed there are several species of plants which can't be seen when you look over the reedbed. The boardwalk cuts through the reedbed and has opened up the edges to light so you can see some of

the smaller species such as the marsh bedstraw, marsh thistle, water mint, purple loosestrife and occasional taller plants which just pop their heads above the reeds such as yellow flag iris and reed mace.

As you walk along the boardwalk to the east the vegetation along the edges is woodier with blackthorn and willow



Purple Loosestrife with reed mace

dominating. Amongst these small trees there were shade loving plants such as herb robert and foxglove which have been in magnificent flower this year. There were also a few figwort plants growing here, these are tall plants with square stems and very delicate tiny dark red flowers. There was also a small shrub of tutsan a member of the Hypericum genus, this is often found as a shrub in gardens in shadier environments.



Figwort flowers



Tutsan flowers

A blackcap was heard singing in from within the dense cover of the trees. We tried pishing to encourage the birds to come closer, this works well with species of warbler, tit and finches when there is dense vegetation cover which they can hide in. It is believed to imitate other birds specifically juvenile sparrowhawk so the birds come out to investigate any potential threat.



The boardwalk widens giving an opportunity to sit down and admire the view over the whole slash pond. This is an excellent vantage point to watch swifts flying over the water and gave us an opportunity to study some of the invertebrates the children had found.

Where the boardwalk ends there is a wildflower meadow which had several species of grass including foxtail, sweet vernal grass, creeping bent and Yorkshire fog. Amongst these grasses there were flowering plants of knapweed and birds foot trefoil amongst other species. There were a number of butterflies including a cabbage white, a meadow brown and a gatekeeper taking advantage of the sunshine whilst they collect nectar from the flowers.



Meadow Brown



Gatekeeper

The meadow would also be attractive to small mammals. This area had a few trees planted in the meadow including a rowan tree. On the bank the other side of the adjoining path bramble and gorse have taken over the area. If the meadow is left uncut the diversity of species will be reduced with grasses dominating over the flowers and woodier species establishing such as bramble and gorse. Although these species are valuable to wildlife it would be better to manage the meadow area by cutting it once a year after the flowers have set seed and raking off the vegetation. This will lead to the diversity of wildflowers being maintained or enhanced. The edges of the meadow could be cut on a 5 year rotation to keep a variety of ages of shrubs which will also increase the biodiversity.

A whitethroat was heard from the gravel path along the eastern edge of the pond. As we walked back to the car park we saw a sparrow hawk in the distance flying across the fields. A moorhen was seen feeding on the pond and a wren was heard calling from the shrubs. There was a small patch of Japanese knotweed which has sprouted, this used to be a problem in a few areas at the slash ponds but persistent treatment has virtually removed this invasive species.

Conclusion

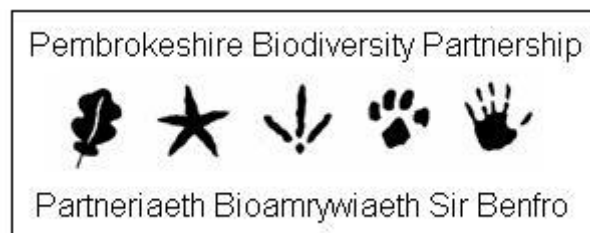
Many species of animal and plant are unable to travel over large areas of improved farmland and urban areas. These areas tend to lack food and shelter from predators, or are simply too large for small creatures to find their way across. Therefore, many species may become confined to small 'islands' of habitat. If these islands become unsuitable for a species, the population may die out and. If the next nearest population is too far away, local extinctions result.

The interlinked habitats leading from Broad Haven Slash Ponds inland, provide excellent opportunities for species to move from one place to another, and create new colonies both within and beyond the farm, helping avoid local extinctions. This connectivity of habitats helps maintain the richness and diversity of our wildlife at both local and national levels; communities such as yours can play an important role in this.

Report produced by: Bethan Cox (Pembrokeshire Biodiversity Partnership)

Thank you to the field naturalist who provided expertise and helped identify species found –

Robin Mogg invertebrates,
Peter Howe –birds / plants,
Bethan Cox – plants



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dros Gymunedau Gwledig gan
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
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Plants

Common Name	Scientific name
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Bittersweet / Woody Nightshade	<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>
Black Mustard	<i>Brassica nigra</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Butterfly Bush	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Common Bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Common Figwort	<i>Scrophularia nodosa</i>
Common Knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common Mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>
Common Reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Common Vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>
Crab Apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Creeping Bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping Forget-Me-Not	<i>Myosotis secunda</i>
Creeping Willow	<i>Salix Repens</i>
Crested Dog'S-Tail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
European Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Fools Watercress	<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Greater Bird'S-Foot-Trefoil	<i>Lotus uliginosus</i>
Grey Willow	<i>Salix cinerea subsp. oleifolia</i>
Ground Elder	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>
Hard Fern	<i>Blechnum spicant</i>
Hart'S-Tongue Fern	<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Hedge Bindweed	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>
Hedge Woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>
Hemp Agrimony	<i>Eupatorium canabium</i>
Herb Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>

Common Name	Scientific name
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Horsetail spp	<i>Equisetum spp</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Japanese Knottweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>
Ladies Bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>
Lesser Spearwort	<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>
Marsh Bedstraw	<i>Galium palustre</i>
Marsh Thistle	<i>Cirsium palustre</i>
Marsh Valerian	<i>Valeriana dioica</i>
Meadow Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>
Meadow Vetchling	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>
Meadowsweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>
Ox-Eye Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>
Purple Loosestrive	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio spp</i>
Red Champion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Red Clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
Reed Mace / Bulrush	<i>Typha latifolia</i>
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>
Rosebay Willow Herb	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Sesile Oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Soft Rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Stinging Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Sweet Vernal-Grass	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>
Tutsan	<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i>
Water Forget-Me-Not	<i>Myosotis scorpioides</i>
Water Mint	<i>Mentha aquatica</i>
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
White Water-Lily	<i>Nymphaea alba</i>
Wild Angelica	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Yellow Iris	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>
Yorkshire-Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>