



April 2012

Wetlands at Conwy – now with added water!

Regular readers may have doubted it would ever happen. There were times that we thought the same. But having talked about it for almost a year, earlier this month we switched on the pumps and 15,000 litres of water flowed every *second* through three huge pipes. The result is a shallow lagoon with more water than we have seen for years, and hopefully the elimination of *Crassula helmsii*.



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Come hell or high water

Over the high tides earlier this month, we pumped an astonishing 30.5 million litres of water from the estuary into the shallow lagoon. That's 6.7 million gallons. Or, to put it another way, if we'd used a one pint beer glass to do the job, we'd have had to refill it 53.7 million times.

The aim is to kill an invasive weed, *Crassula helmsii*, often sold in garden centres as New Zealand Pygmyweed. Left unchecked, it will form a thick, spongy mat over the mud and suffocate the life beneath it. We'll be leaving the saltwater in this lagoon for at least a year, monitoring the response of *Crassula* and native species.

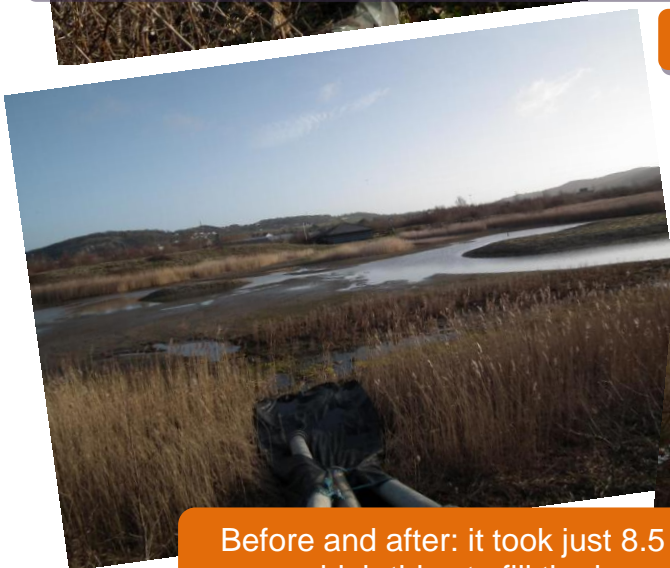
The project, part-funded by Environment Agency Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales, featured on BBC Radio Wales and Radio Cymru, local papers and BBC Wales Today and ITV Wales News, and was undertaken by Conwy Morfa-based specialists Selwood.



Radio Wales' Chris Dearden gets some sound effects



Selwood's team and the BBC get a good view



Before and after: it took just 8.5 hours of high tides to fill the lagoon





a million voices for nature
miliwn o leisiau dros fyd natur

Photostream 2012



We've been delighted at the wonderful photos that have already been uploaded to the website and flickr this year. Choosing the best has been a tough job, and so there have been plenty of runners-up and honourable mentions.

January's photo of the month was Andy Berry's fabulous flight shot of a curlew on a rich blue winter sky, while February's award went to the blackthorn blossom taken by Jane Baker.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) to find out who'll be selected as the March PotM.

Will your photo be one of our favourites in 2012?

We like to make the most of the amazing photos that visitors take at RSPB Conwy, so each month we choose our favourites to feature in our e-news, social media, on display around the reserve and in the monthly *Warblings* column in the North Wales Weekly News.

Towards the end of 2012, a gallery of our favourites will be displayed at the reserve, and visitors will be invited to vote for their favourite. The winners will be announced by the end of January 2013.

Upload them to www.flickr.com/groups/rspb_conwy or www.rspb.org.uk/conwy.

*See either website for details of the rules. Copyright of photos remains with the photographer. By uploading your photos, you allow the RSPB to use images to help promote Conwy reserve and the RSPB's work.



Events and activities throughout the spring

Click on the blue links for more details and how to book

Free walks and self-guided activities

Every Saturday morning

Every Wednesday evening (May to August)

[Guided wildlife walk](#)

[Summer evening stroll](#)

April

Tuesday 3 April

Sunday 8 April

Sunday 15 April

[Muddy Puddle Club:
Ugly Bug Badge Day](#)
Sorry, fully booked!

[The big Conwy Easter
Egg Hunt!](#)

[Gardeners Market and
specialist plant fair](#)

Wednesday 25 April

Sunday 29 April

[Conwy Farmers' Market](#)

[Birds for Beginners](#)

May

Monday 7 May

Wednesday 9 May

Sunday 20 May

[Wake up with the dawn
chorus \(and breakfast\)](#)

[Coffee shop opens at
11.30 am](#)

[Gardeners Market and
specialist plant fair](#)

Sunday 27 May

Wednesday 30 May

[Birds for Beginners](#)

[Conwy Farmers'
Market](#)

Conwy Connections

We've recently had two great pieces of news that mean we can give the green light to plans that visitors, staff and volunteers have been dreaming up for at least four years. The Countryside Council for Wales has granted the RSPB up to £179,000 towards a programme of work that we're calling Conwy Connections, and the volunteers in RSPB Conwy Support Group have raised an impressive £30,000 towards the match-funding in less than two years. This shows huge support for what we are proposing, for which we're very grateful.

Y Maes @ RSPB Conwy The grass and gravel area between the Visitor Centre and Coffee Shop will be transformed into a multi-use space for all, the 'village square' of the reserve: a place for everyone, throughout the year. Natural features and native plants will introduce more children to nature, stimulating learning through play and their own imaginations. Mounds, tunnels, hollows, boulders, trees and logs will provide a challenging and inspirational environment to explore nature close-up. Subject to planning permission, work on this will take place in summer 2013.



New views On the edge of Y Maes will be a new 'Jubilee observatory', built into the earth bank between the coffee shop and boardwalk. Large windows at the front will look across newly-created lagoon-edge habitat and the Conwy Valley beyond, and it will provide a small events space for a range of activities. Subject to planning consent, work on this would take place in autumn/winter 2012.

Car park We want to improve the surface along the in/out routes and near the Visitor Centre, increase the number of spaces for blue-badge holders, widen the entrance and provide a footpath along the south side so that you don't have to dodge the traffic as you walk back from the estuary or arrive from Deganwy. This will be the first part of the project to be completed, in October 2012.

Water from the sun Our south-facing coffee shop is ideal for solar panels, and we'd invest in solar thermal tubes that would heat the water used in the hand-basins and the coffee shop, including the dishwasher. This would make a big dent

in the greenhouse gases that are emitted from the electricity we use, and save money on fuel bills that we could spend on wildlife conservation. Subject to planning permission, this will be installed over winter 2012/13.

Next steps We should hear news on our planning application by the end of April. Conwy Connections will also create two new posts: a Communications Officer and a Project Officer, which we are recruiting at the moment. We'll give visitors plenty of notice before we start construction, and there will be some access restrictions to parts of the reserve, particularly during any improvements to the car park.



The Conwy Connections initiative is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Welsh Government and is a component element of the Countryside Council for Wales' Communities and Nature (CAN) strategic project. CAN aims to generate increased economic growth and sustainable jobs by capitalising on Wales' environmental qualities, particularly its landscape and wildlife.

Going greener



With the help of volunteers, staff and visitors, we've been going greener in the last three years, working to reduce the impact of the reserve's operations on the rest of the planet.

You may have noticed the new information panels that have been appearing around the buildings, which provide more detail. The headlines of our 2011 report are:

- The reduction(-4.2%) in our electricity exceeded our target (-3%) in 2011, bringing the total **saving so far to 5.66 tonnes of carbon dioxide and more than £3000** in fuel bills. A Powerperfector voltage optimiser and replacing halogen and fluorescent lamps in the Visitor Centre with low-energy LEDs have made the biggest difference.
- The average annual **reduction in CO₂ emissions** from staff business travel is **15%** (target 8.7%)
- We reduced water consumption in 2011 but by less than our hoped-for 3%. Had we continued to use water at 2008 levels, the reserve **would have used an additional 80,000 litres** over the last three years.
- There was a small reduction in the number of chemical products used on site.
- Disappointingly, and despite the introduction of cooked food composting facilities, waste sent to landfill increased a little (by 49 litres per week). We're working hard to find outlets and recycling schemes for the minority of waste that ends up in the bin.

Volunteer opportunities at Conwy

Social Media Volunteer

Why we need you

Social media is growing in importance and we need someone to help with the day-to-day duties of managing the reserve's facebook, twitter and flickr accounts, responding to posts from other people, writing our blog and ensuring that our events, activities and stories are effectively placed on other websites

What you'll need

- Excellent writing skills for a varied audience
- A love of wildlife
- An understanding of websites and social media channels
- A knowledge of local tourism

Time commitment

Half a day each week

Who to contact

Julian Hughes, Conwy reserve
01492 584091

Visitor Surveyor

Why we need you

Across the RSPB, we want to know how our top visitor sites compare, and what our visitors want. We need to know what our visitors think of changes that we've made, and what would provide them with a high quality experience when they visit.

What you'll need

You'll need to have the confidence to approach visitors and invite them to fill in a short questionnaire about their visit to the reserve. You would need to be comfortable talking to visitors, polite and tactful, and interested in people's opinions.

Time commitment

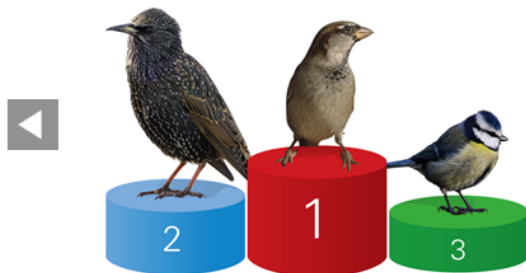
One or two half days each week, a mix of weekdays and weekends to suit you

Who to contact

Joy Vyner, Conwy reserve
01492 584091

For more details about volunteering with the RSPB, please visit our [website](#).

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch 2012: the results are in!



A photo finish

It was tight at the top, but house sparrow just pipped starling and blue tit as the number one garden bird.

Visit the [RSPB website](#) for all the details

RSPB Conwy nature reserve, Llandudno Junction, Conwy LL31 9XZ.
Tel: 01492 584091 www.rspb.org.uk/conwy

Job opportunities at Conwy

There are three vacancies coming up at the reserve. Could one be right up your street? Visit our [website](#) for more details.

Part-time [Administrator](#)

20 hours a week, £13.5-£15k pro rata
Are you an organised person? Think you can organise the team at RSPB Conwy?

We're looking for someone with good interpersonal skills who is committed to high standards of customer care. And you'll need to be a good organiser, able to handle a wide variety of admin tasks, from the routine to the unexpected. You'll be responsible for purchasing office and cleaning supplies, ensuring the visitor facilities are maintained, and processing financial transactions. You'll have a passion for nature and ideally be able to communicate in English and Welsh.

Closing date: 11 April

Interviews: 19 April

Part-time [Visitor Centre Assistant](#)

3 days a week, £12.5-£14.5k pro rata
Are you a people-person looking for an exciting job in a stunning location? Conwy reserve's Visitor Centre is a busy place, and you'd be joining the team to assist in achieving its recruitment and retail objectives while providing a high quality customer service and a great visitor experience. You'll have experience in a customer care role, be numerate and have a knowledge of birds and wildlife. If you have previous experience in retail and/or sales, or recruiting people to a good cause, and can speak Welsh and English, that's even better. The role will be principally weekends and bank holidays, but you will need to be flexible to work on a rota.

Closing date: 6 April

Interviews: 17 April



Conwy Connections [Project Officer](#)

4 days a week, £17-£19k pro rata

Could you help to deliver an exciting new visitor project at Conwy nature reserve? We are looking for someone to support the management of the project, provide comprehensive financial and administrative support, responsible for claiming the grant funding that will enable us to create new facilities for visitors. You'll have a strong background in financial administration, good interpersonal skills and be good at working on your own initiative. Having project management skills and experience of standard contracts would be an advantage. As well as working in a great environment, the reward will be the construction of a project which thousands of people will enjoy over the next decade.

Closing date: 18 April

Interviews: 27 April

The Conwy Connections initiative is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Welsh Government and is a component element of the Countryside Council for Wales' Communities and Nature (CAN) strategic project. CAN aims to generate increased economic growth and sustainable jobs by capitalising on Wales' environmental qualities, particularly its landscape and wildlife.

Building news

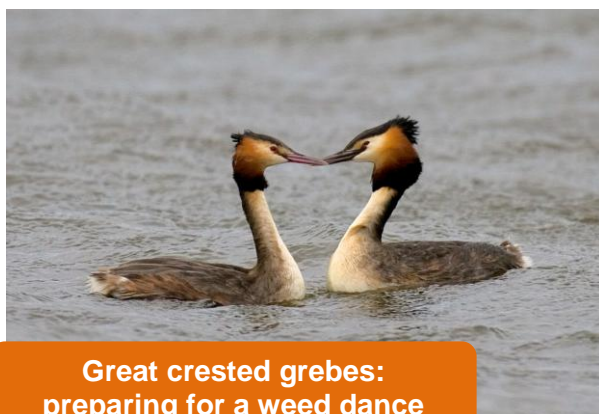


We've had great feedback from visitors about the new bridge across the pond. Do you like it?

It was opened in mid February after two weeks' construction by Coed Dinefwr, based in Carmarthenshire. The design reflects the wetland habitats, and children love the viewpoint that we created in the middle of the bridge, to look into the pond.

Meanwhile, if you've visited the reserve this week, you'll have seen the diggers working at the entrance. The sliproad from the roundabout to the reserve is owned by North Wales Trunk Roads Agency, who are improving the parking at the estuary viewpoint. We hope that proper parking will improve access, both of cars to the reserve and for pedestrians returning from the trails or arriving from Deganwy.

Recent sightings



Great crested grebes:
preparing for a weed dance

With **cowslips** emerging on the bank outside the coffee shop, the first **swallows** feeding over the lagoons and bumblebees buzzing around the **blackthorn** blossom, there's definitely more than just a hint of spring in the air. Following the first **sand martins** on 12th March, the last two weeks have seen plenty of **chiffchaffs** singing, several **wheatears**, the first **whimbrel**, as well as the first **swallow** on 21st.

A pair of **great crested grebes** have been displaying to each other during the month,

and we hope that they will breed again. We hope too that the two **little grebes** will stay. The morning air is filled with the sound of **lapwings** displaying, and several pairs of **oystercatchers** have taken up residence. An **osprey** was an excellent sight last Friday, mobbed by gulls as it flew north. With high water levels because of the *Crassula* control work, there'll be fewer opportunities for passage waders, though a few smart **black-tailed godwits** have already been spotted. April and May are the best months for migration at Conwy, so get down here to see this annual event in action, or join us on the Dawn Chorus and Breakfast on 7 May! Read more on our [sightings blog](#).

New spring range features great gifts for Easter

We have new lots of new products in the shop, including some great gift ideas. Here are some examples from our gardening range to whet your appetite...



We particularly love these fencepost finials!



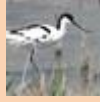
Just in, is a range of craft books and kits for all ages. Cross stitch & tapestry kits, card making materials, children's keyring kits and woodcraft. Why not try your hand at making a trash robot? Go on, you know you want to!

Where's that swan from? Adrian Foster, a regular contributor to our [Flickr](#) page, recently photographed a couple of colour-ringed mute swans. This one, marked ABST, was ringed by Cheshire Swan Study Group as a second-year female at Llandudno's West Shore boating lake in 2006. It's been reported many times since, either at the lake or on the reserve, demonstrating that most mute swans don't travel far. The record distance for a ringed mute swan is 1726 km between Lithuania and Dumfries & Galloway. If you find a ringed bird, please report it to the BTO (which runs the UK ringing scheme) through www.ring.ac and they'll tell you what they know about it.



Tweet, tweet!

Follow us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#) for all the latest reserve news



[@AnnRSPBNBucks](#)
[@rspbconwy](#) [@VikingOptical](#)
Always great advice at Conwy - bought my first good bins there



[@notcat](#)
The daughter had a wonderful time pond-dipping this afternoon, (Oh, Okay, I did too!) Thank You
[@rspbconwy](#)



[@HomeFrontMuseum](#)
Fabulous afternoon [@rspbconwy](#).
Displaying grebes, stoat playing feet away, Spring migrants, a peregrine fly past and delicious cakes! superb



[@C_Dearden](#)
Just been doing live interview [@bbcradiowales](#) about the project to get rid of an invasive weed called Crassula [@rspbconwy](#)



[@charlieoak](#) 3rd trip to [@rspbconwy](#) with another forest school group. Year 2 this time. Another great visit. Thank you very much!



The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing – help us keep it that way.
Registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654

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