

## Agri-Environment Schemes and Pollinators

### Key Points and Further Information from the walk held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Morag McCracken and Joanna Staley from the UK Centre for Hydrology and Ecology (UKCEH) gave a talk about their study, 'Landscape-scale species monitoring of agri-environment schemes (LandSpAES)' on two farms that were part of the research. Alec Hitchman and Olivia and William Forsyth kindly allowed us to access their land, where Morag & Jo demonstrated their survey equipment, explained how it was conducted and provided insight into the results.

The study looked at whether agri-environment schemes (AES) help mobile (flight) species at a local level as well as beyond farm boundaries at a landscape level. It had a biodiversity angle with a policy driver.

The overarching conclusion was that mobile species benefit from agri-environment schemes targeted at biodiversity; this provides evidence for Defra to continue payments for these schemes. Biodiversity is complex, all species have different adaptations and behave differently so you won't see them across all sites. For example, bird species increased in lowland areas but not so much in the uplands, despite AES; hoverflies live on aphids so were found in greater areas of arable land in AES areas.

#### Result highlights:

- 53% more butterflies on survey squares with high AES in surrounding landscape
- 12 extra moth species with high local AES in the survey square
- 19 bumble bee species were identified; more were found where flowers were present across the survey squares
- Greater numbers of larger, highly mobile hoverflies were found where landscape AES was high; more aphid feeding species were found in areas with more arable
- 25% more wintering birds in squares with high local AES
- 16 bat species were identified including the rare Bechstein's and Greater Horseshoe Bats

Please see this PDF/link for a short summary of the study.

[UKCEH-Landscape-scale-species-monitoring-newsletter.pdf \(ruralhub.org.uk\)](#)

If you would like more detailed information of the results, then please ask your group facilitator.

#### Other UKCEH resources

Sustainable farming practical guide videos (3-4 mins each) presented by Marek Nowakowski. Includes, in-field strips and hedges, encouraging beneficial insects, hedge management and E-surveyor app to monitor biodiversity that were all discussed on the walk - [Practical guides to sustainable farming - YouTube](#)

These documents on hedgerows were also mentioned in the walk:

[Why Rejuvenate Hedges.pdf \(ruralhub.org.uk\)](#)

[Relaxed Hedgecutting Regimes.pdf \(ruralhub.org.uk\)](#)

Some members were interested in the E-surveyor app designed to help with identifying and monitoring farmland biodiversity for assessment of habitats and agri-environment schemes -

[E-Surveyor | UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology \(ceh.ac.uk\)](#)

UKCEH are also undertaking an expansive study, AgZero+, on supporting the UK's transition towards sustainable, carbon-neutral farming systems that have a positive effect on nature. The aim is to provide UK farmers with free, high-quality data on practices for reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions and capturing carbon, and their trade-offs or synergies with agricultural yield and multiple environmental outcomes. For more information - [AgZero+ | AgZeroPlus](#)