

Burrenbeo Newsletter October 2007

Livestock take to the hills for another winter

Over the past few weeks Burren farmers have been restocking their Burren winterages for another season, continuing a tradition thought to be hundreds - if not thousands - of years old. The practice of Winterage is unique - most other upland areas in Europe are destocked for the winter, whereas in the limestone landscape of the Burren, the plentiful supply of winter forage and water, as well as the warm 'dry lie' means that these areas are eminently suitable for winter use by livestock. Recent research has proven the importance of winter grazing for the Burren's special biodiversity, while for generations of farmers it has represented a very healthy, low cost method of over-wintering livestock.

Though traditionally the Burren winterages were used for beef 'stores', today mainly suckler cows (below) are kept. Many of these cows calve out on the winterages, others are taken home and housed. Stock normally remain on the hills for several months, some until April-May. However, poor returns from farming and the high labour input involved in wintering has seen a decline in the practice in recent years, resulting in an erosion in the heritage value of many areas. If you are in the Burren this winter, make sure you check out this unique practice and remember how important it is to ensure that it should continue in future years.



Calling all farmers

Continuing on an agricultural theme, The BurrenLIFE project (see below) are organizing a major series of public information meetings aimed at the Burren farming community in the coming weeks. These key meetings will provide an update on the work of the project and will also allow farmers a chance to express their hopes and opinions on how they, as custodians of the Burren, see the future evolution of farming in the region.

Tuesday Nov 6th: Hylands Ballyvaughan

Wednesday Nov. 7th: Russell Centre, Doolin.

Tuesday Nov. 13th: Cassidys, Carron.

Wednesday Nov 14th: Community Hall, Tubber.

Please contact info@burrenlife.com or 065-7089000 for more info. All events begin at 8pm sharp.

Upcoming Events:

Ennis November 6th & 7th The Annual Ceifin conference 2007 in the West County Hotel, Ennis. For further details, contact Ciara Griffin at The Céifin Centre. Tel: 061 365912 for more details.

Ennis Thursday, November 8th to Monday, November 12th. The Annual Ennis Traditional Music Festival with events taking place in over 20 venues. For more info, please visit www.ennistradfestival.com

Ballyvaughan Tues. Nov 20th at 7pm. St. John's Hall, Ballyvaughan. Public meeting about the Water Framework Directive in the Western River Basin District (WRBD). All welcome, admission free.

Ennistymon Monday Nov. 26th Falls Hotel Ennistymon. North Clare Historical Society Lecture by Dr. Brendan Dunford. Title: Symphonies in Stone - Our Burren Heritage. Tel. 065-7071051 for more information.

Useful links for Burren activities this winter:

Yoga: The Burren Yoga Centre near Kinvara - <http://www.burrenyoga.com>

Hiking: The Ballyvaughan-Fanore walking club <http://www.ballyvaughanfanorewalkingclub.com/>

Water sports: For a range of watersports from diving to surfing - www.burrenadventures.com/

Sustainable Burren

The Burren is a special landscape, one that requires a particularly sensitive approach to its management. Currently, three major projects are underway in the region aimed at ensuring a sustainable future for the heritage of the Burren and its communities. These separate, though overlapping projects, work closely with local communities and focus on the various key sectors in the region - agriculture, tourism and education.

The BurrenLIFE Project. Farming for Conservation in the Burren.

Contact: www.burrenlife.com info@burrenlife.com Tel. 065-7089000. Old Schoolhouse, Carron, Co. Clare

A 5-year (Sept 2004-2009), 2.3m euro EC funded applied research project, which aims to create a blueprint for sustainable farming in the Burren. Partners: National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), Teagasc and BurrenIFA.

The Burren Connect Project Linking environment, community and tourism to help conserve the Burren.

Contact: cgleeson@burren.ie or emccarthy@burren.ie 065-7072296. C/O Clare Co. Co., Ennis Road, Ennistymon

A new (late 2006) 'environmental management of the Burren through visitor management initiative' funded through Fáilte Ireland in partnership with Clare County Council, Shannon Development, NPWS and Burrenbeo.

The Burrenbeo Project Open your eyes to the living Burren. Interactive interpretative centre for the Burren

Contact: www.burrenbeo.com, info@burrenbeo.com Main Street, Kinvara, Co. Galway. Tel. 091-638096.

A voluntary, non-profit information and education provider for the Burren founded in 2002. Specialising in increasing awareness, appreciation and appropriate management of the heritage of the Burren.

Some flowers still in bloom in the Burren this Autumn:

As winter descends on the Burren, the autumnal hues of molinia, heathers and bracken dominate, though some pin-points of floristic colour may still be seen including: Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Bloody cranesbill (*Geranium sanguineum*), Mountain avens (*Dryas octopetala*), Cat's ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), Common Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), St. John's wort (*Hypericum* spp.), Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*), Devil's but scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*), Common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and **Below (L-R): Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertarium*) and Wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*)**



Five handy colour flora checksheets available now to download from www.burrenbeo.com

Support Burrenbeo

You can support the work of Burrenbeo by promoting the Burrenbeo website www.burrenbeo.com and referring people to the range of quality accommodation and service providers listed on the site - businesses which support the non-profit work of Burrenbeo. We would also welcome any Burren news, info, articles etc to post on the website and are happy to promote free local and community events. Also, please visit us at Café Beo in Kinvara. Winter Opening: Wed - Sat, 10am - 5pm, Sunday 12 - 5pm.