

# How You Can Help!

## Volunteer opportunities

### SEED SOWING:

To begin improving some of the meadows wildflower seed is sown. WoW will need help to collect seed locally and then sow it on our target sites.

### GREEN HAY SPREADING:

Spreading green hay from one site onto another is also a good way to 'kick start' a hay meadow restoration.

### PLUG PLANTING:

By planting plants as plugs you give them a better chance to grow and establish, this can give them a head start over their competition.

### SCRUB CLEARANCE:

This will help to prevent grasslands turning into scrubby woodland and help keep the rich diversity of the hay meadows and pastures.

Interested in this project or other WoW projects? Contact.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Wealth of Wildlife Project  
wow@cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk  
T. 01768 212528

For further information on this project and others visit us at

[www.wealthofwildlife.org.uk](http://www.wealthofwildlife.org.uk)

# Wealth of Wildlife

The Wealth of Wildlife (WoW) project aims to promote Cumbria as the number one wildlife destination in the country, protecting Cumbria's rare species and habitats, and involving people in practical conservation work.

## The Legal Bit

Wild habitats and their Flora and Fauna are protected under various British and European laws. So when you are visiting these areas please take care not to damage or disturb any of the plants and animals that live there.

For guidance and advice on the legal protection of these places go to [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk) or 01733 455101

### Photo Credits:

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WEALTH OF WILDLIFE

# The Diverse Nature of

# Hay Meadows



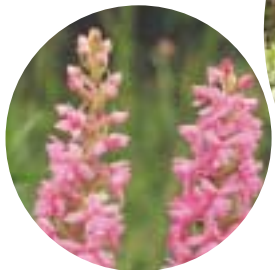
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WEALTH OF WILDLIFE  
project

# Why Hay Meadows?

The diversity of flowers and plants in an unimproved hay meadow or lowland pasture, with many different species often in quite small areas, create natural beauty and vibrant colour. This contrasts sharply with the uniform green of improved pastures and silage fields, common throughout the Cumbrian landscape, which have just a few competitive species. Unimproved hay meadows and lowland pastures were once a familiar site in the British countryside, but more intensive farming methods since World War II have led to declines in these habitats of up to 97%.

It is thought, for example, that less than 500 hectares (1,200 acres) of upland hay meadow now remain in Cumbria. However, with the introduction of Environmental Stewardship – a new scheme to help farmers and other landowners deliver environmental benefits on their land – it is hoped that some local improvements will be possible.

Hay meadows and lowland pastures are particularly important for species such as the brown hare and breeding birds such as redshank, curlew and yellow wagtail. They can also provide important feeding areas for insects including butterflies and bees and for insect-feeding bats. Other predators, such as barn owls and stoats, use these habitats as hunting grounds.



# What is WoW doing?

## Project aims

The *Wealth of Wildlife* (WoW) hay meadows and lowland pastures project will improve the wildlife value of a minimum of 15 ha (37 acres) of land on a range of sites across Cumbria. A variety of restoration techniques will be used and a series of demonstration days held. Technical advice will be available to any landowners who would like to improve the wildlife value of their meadows.

## Habitat Re-creation

Sites with low soil fertility offer the greatest potential for restoration. High nutrient levels tend to favour agricultural grasses, which outgrow many wild plants and lead to a site dominated by a small number of species. Such sites could be restored, but it does take longer as intensive management may be needed to reduce the fertility of the soil. WoW concentrates, therefore, on restoring meadows with relatively low soil fertility and some existing botanical interest.

Stopping the application of fertilisers, including farmyard manure, can reduce the fertility of the soil, especially when followed by repeated cutting and removal of the grass. Introducing yellow rattle plants, which are partial parasites on agricultural grasses can reduce their dominance. Once the ground is prepared, fresh, green hay from a nearby donor site can be spread onto the grassland. Dry seed collected from local species-rich grassland, roadside verges or from specialist seed suppliers can also be used. 'Plug planting' individual plants grown from seed may be suitable for smaller areas.

An important part of WoW is the identification of species-rich donor sites.



# Did you know?

The best hay meadows can contain up to 35 species of plants and grasses per square metre and up to 120 species in a single field.

Hay meadows in Britain provide important nest sites for a globally threatened bird species, the corn crane (*Crex crex*).

Plant species found in these habitats include wood crane's-bill, great burnet, devil's-bit scabious and yellow rattle, with less common plants such as globe flower, small white orchid and pepper saxifrage occasionally found.