

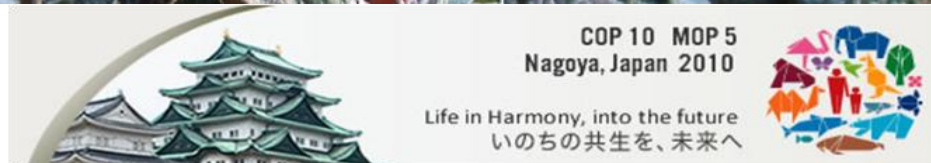
Conservation Grade *Nature Friendly Farming* Winter 2010

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Outcomes from the Nagoya COP10

Ministers from almost 200 countries attended the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya (Japan) from 18 to 29 October 2010.

One of the great achievements of this conference has been to highlight the fact that biodiversity is not just about saving a few cute animals, but about preventing risks to entire ecosystems, economies and ultimately human life.

Key outcomes have been to establish a new Strategic Plan and Targets in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The previous target, which anticipated reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, has not been reached.



The discussions on the new plan were long, drawn-out and heated, a bit like the Copenhagen climate change talks, with many countries against setting targets that were too ambitious or that had fixed dates or percentages, in order to avoid any

further failure from being noted, while civil society and some Parties were proposing more ambitious plans and the need to mobilise financial resources to help developing countries fulfil them.

In the end the following key outcomes were agreed:

- **New national Biodiversity targets ("The Aichi targets")**
 - ⇒ To at least halve the loss of natural habitats by 2020
 - ⇒ To expand nature reserves to 17% of the world's land area by 2020 (c.f. 10% now)
 - ⇒ Protect aquatic life by widening marine protection zones to 10% of the world's seas, (c.f. <1% now).
 - halt over-fishing, control invasive species, reduce pollution, minimise the pressure on coral reefs from ocean acidification

(Continued on page 4)

Regional Technical Updates – Winter 2010 Brin Hughes reports...

The latest round of CG Regional Updates were well attended by members, who braved wintery drizzle, hard frosts and icy winds.



Our first stop was at **Redhouse Farm in Hampshire**. Peter and Zoe Boyle were our hosts for the **Southern Region Technical Update** on a cold and wet day in November. The farms recently refurbished outbuildings double as Peter's meeting room and shooting lodge, and thankfully had an efficient wood burner on the go. Zoe's tremendous shepherd's pie and apple crumble were just the job before we braved the elements to look round the farm.

This 5 acre field (left) is a wonderful example of a classic wildflower meadow in the making. It was sown 6 years ago and Peter explained that the grass was now starting to dominate. The plan is to graze

it quite hard in spring with some sheep from a neighbour to allow the flowers to get going again. Peter will also scatter some green hay and maybe some yellow rattle to increase the floral diversity.

This 2 year bird seed mix (right), sandwiched between two small woods, contained millet, kale and utopia, and although the millet had run its course, the other plants were doing their job very well according to the swarms of finches and linnets we disturbed.



The farm is part of an ongoing survey for mink in the area, and Peter Thompson checked the mink raft, strategically placed in one of Peter's ditches, to see if any had passed through recently.... they hadn't!



The **Central Region Technical Update** was held in November at **The Oaks in Leicestershire**. Michael Skinner (left) was our host, ably assisted by the two Mrs Skinners in the catering department (we were very well looked after!).

The farm, which was put into HLS recently, has some very nice examples of ridge and furrow and the Union Canal passes right through the middle. Michael showed us his annual bird seed mixes, sown in spring 2010 for HLS & CG with a mix of Quinoa, mustard, phacelia, triticale and chicory. It was a very cold November day and the flocks of linnets, greenfinches and yellowhammers were certainly benefitting.



The hedges on the farm are cut lightly every 2 years and the 6 metre pollen and nectar margins which buffer most hedges, are cut annually and sprayed with a graminicide to keep the tussocky grasses in check. Interestingly Michael gathers up the cuttings and heaps them in piles at the corners of each field, using his grain bucket. These heaps provide a superb habitat for grass snakes.





To encourage variety, the farm also has 2 year bird seed mixes based on Kale. The picture on the left shows how the kale from year one had established, although part of the block had been attacked by Michael's sheep after they broke through an old fence!



Robert Rand kindly hosted the **Eastern Region Technical Update at his farm, Hatchpen, in Hertfordshire**, on a very cold and frosty day in December. Fortunately the bus, which Rob drove us all round in, avoided getting stuck and provided a warm refuge between viewing the habitats.

Hatchpen, which is in HLS and is managed for a large shoot, is a haven for wild birds of countless varieties and one of the farms red kites made an appearance as the bus pulled up alongside some winter bird cover. All the wheat (right) is harvested with a stripper header combine so the remaining straw provides some extra cover, and bird food.



Stripped wheat

The winter bird seed mixes are sown in larger blocks around and within fields, rather than just as smaller margins. The benefit was clear to see with 'clouds' of linnets regularly taking off as we examined the plants in the frost.



Pollen & nectar mix

This 6 metre block of legume based pollen & nectar mix (left) was established 2 years ago and is showing a healthy range of clover and birds foot trefoil. The other side of the track has a 6 metre tussocky & fine grass margin and together they provide a corridor to link 2 areas of woodland.



Flock of linnets over bird seed mix

The old chalk pit on the farm (right) has been converted into a marvellous wild-flower meadow as part of HLS using native seed harvested at great financial expense from the neighbouring chalk heathland.

Thanks go to all our hosts:



Peter Boyle



Michael Skinner



Robert Rand



Old chalk pit



(Continued from page 1)

- **A new ABS protocol (access to and sharing of the benefits of biodiversity)**
 - ⇒ To manage the world's genetic resources and share the multibillion-dollar benefits with developing nations and indigenous communities
- **Resources mobilisation plan (finance)**
 - ⇒ Japan, has pledged \$2bn
 - ⇒ UK pledged £300m (under labour govt)....plus further £100m from the coalition.

In the recent TEEB Report for Business (www.teebweb.org), Price Waterhouse Coopers valued the annual cost of Biodiversity loss to business globally as between \$2-4.5 trillion. The report articulates policy changes that put biodiversity ahead of the political agenda across the globe and hails Conservation Grade as a key farming system to address and reverse global losses.

Plant life in peril - IUCN and Kew Gardens study

Alarming new research reveals human activity is 'devastating' plant life, with up to twenty-two per cent of the world's plants facing extinction.

A global analysis of extinction risk for the world's plants, conducted by Kew together with the Natural History Museum, London and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), has revealed that the world's plants are as threatened as mammals, with one in five of the world's plant species threatened with extinction. The study, entitled *IUCN Sampled Red List Index for Plants*, is a major baseline for plant conservation and is the first time that the true extent of the threat to the world's estimated 380,000 plant species is known.



Experts fear that species are being eradicated before they have a chance to study them. The loss of plant life across the globe will affect all species experts say, including humans. Plants containing essential medicinal properties are the only source of treatment for certain communities in developing countries such as India. If these are wiped out scientists fear it could have devastating effects.

'In reality we have seen an overall increase in the decline of biodiversity worldwide,' Steve Bachman, Plant Conservation Analyst at the Royal Botanic Gardens, claimed. 'Governments need to decide on local, regional and national actions'.

The study found that deforestation is the most devastating threat to plant life, with timber and paper production significantly affecting Coniferous species, such as cedars and pine trees, as well as cycads.

Experts also found that rainforests were the most threatened habitat and that plant species found in the tropics were most at risk.

For further information: <http://www.cbd.int/gspc/intro.shtml>



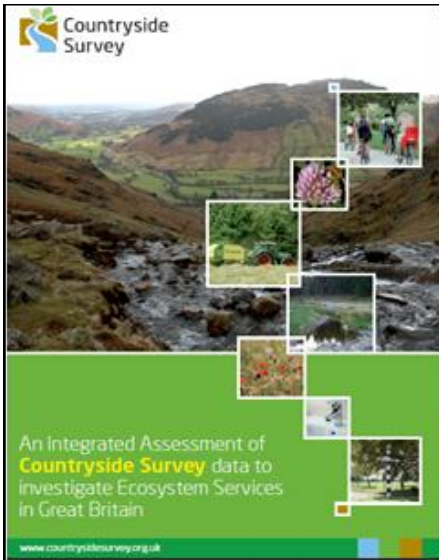
Surprise climate change deal at Cancun

Unlike the previous Copenhagen talks, the recent UN conference in Cancun, Mexico agreed on a modest deal to get efforts to tackle the growing threat of global warming back on track, including a new "green climate fund" fund to help poor nations.

The talks had been in deadlock and expected to end in abject failure, but were rescued by concessions from countries including Russia, Japan, China & America. At last, it seems, the big powers have agreed on the scale of the problem. The countries have agreed to cut their emissions and work to ensure global temperature rises stay below 2C.

Some say this is all a bit symbolic and will do little to reverse the surge in global greenhouse gas emissions, now standing at 50billion tons of CO2 each year, especially as the agreement sets no targets for individual nations to cut emissions and no system for monitoring any cuts. Friends of the Earth have described the agreement as "weak & ineffective – but at least it gives us a small and fragile lifeline".





New scientific study reveals possible reasons for decline of pollinators

Findings from a new scientific study, by the Countryside Survey Partnership, show that the total effect of changes to small patches of land over a number of years could be one of the factors in the decline of pollinating insects such as bees.

The Countryside Survey Integrated Assessment report examines the status and trends of ecological processes that have value for individuals or society within Great Britain. Headline messages from the report concern different ecosystem services, including pollination, soils, and the quality of freshwaters and their relationship with biodiversity.

The analysis reveals that between 1990 and 2007 the number of wild plant species that provide nectar for bees has decreased, in small patches of semi natural habitat. These small but highly significant changes combine to make a total reduction in the areas supporting wild nectar providing plants that pollinators rely on.

Environment Secretary, Caroline Spelman, said:

"Pollinating insects are vital to our existence, helping to provide the food on our tables. It is important that we investigate the causes of the decline and take action to address it. The UK has some of the best environmental scientists in the world and using their skills we are gathering more information on changes to our land and the effects this has on species and habitats. This survey will help us analyse what effects policy decisions have and where and how we need to take action."

The report concludes that the decline is mainly due to nectar providing plants being crowded out by the growth of more competitive plant species. This overgrowth may be related to reduced management and air pollution where the deposition of nitrogenous compounds from the air acts like a fertilizer. In one habitat type – streamside margins – this reduced management has had benefits for freshwater quality, indicating the importance of not considering single ecosystem benefits in isolation.

The Countryside Survey can be found at: <http://www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk/>

News from the National Bee Unit

If you have your own honey bees, you may be interested in the following:

- The NBU have revised their leaflet on Small Hive Beetle, which can be downloaded from the NBU site. <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/>
- NBU are also still running their **Bee Husbandry Survey**. If you haven't already done so, please take 10 minutes and complete it: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/surveys/husbandry2010/survey.cfm>

*photo by William Shaw



Honeybees on Stephen Honeywood's farm in Suffolk





Are you Europe's bee-friendly farmer of the year?

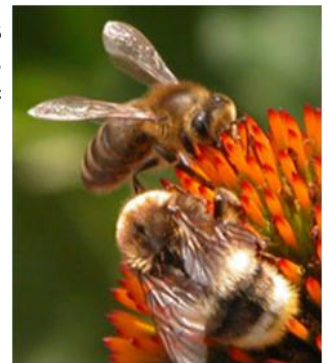
You could be by entering the PAN Europe IP farmer of the year award!

This year Pesticide Action Network Europe is launching a new competition to find trail blazing farmers who are promoting biodiversity through integrated production farming methods.

Each year they envisage investigating a different aspect of farming and biodiversity. This year they are proudly launching a competition in collaboration with European Beekeeping Coordination.

They are inviting both nominated and self-selecting entries from across Europe and hope that we can show innovative and inspirational methods being used by farmers to protect the precious bee populations of Europe. They want to give these farmers the opportunity to tell their stories and give them the recognition they deserve.

To enter visit www.pan-uk.org/agriculture/test



Biofuel plan will cause rise in carbon emissions

The Department for Transport has pledged to reassess its biofuel policy after a study by the Institute for European Environmental Policy found that the greenhouse gas emissions associated with biofuel production outweigh those given off by fossil fuels. The study concludes that biofuels will create an extra 56 million tons of CO₂ per year – the equivalent of 12 to 26 million cars on Europe's roads by 2020.



Last year, Britain signed a European Union directive which committed it to getting ten percent of its total energy in transport through biofuels by 2020. However, nearly all biofuels used in the UK are sourced outside the EU, with producers cutting down South American and Asian forests to meet demand. The government has asked the European Commission to act to reduce the deforestation currently caused by biofuel production.

First generation biofuels, made from crops such as oilseed rape, sugar cane and palms, were once considered a solution to burning fossil fuels. Such crops, it was argued, would give off the same amount of carbon as they had absorbed when growing – making their use carbon neutral and a key component in reducing global emissions.



Environmental Stewardship news



Temporary freeze on new HLS agreements now lifted

On 16th November 2010 Defra confirmed the details of spending on Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) until 2014. The announcement means that farmers who have applied to join the HLS scheme this year, and are waiting to learn if they've been successful, can be given start dates.

Spending on HLS will increase by more than 80 per cent by 2014 which will guarantee the future of HLS, ensure that the scheme delivers the greatest possible benefits for wildlife and the natural environment, and keep it open to new applicants.

Payment changes

Following an EU audit of English agri-environment schemes, Natural England will be amending payments of ES agreements to comply with the Commission's view of the EU rules. This means that all payments will now be made at certain points in the year, rather than on the existing rolling programme.



A hare photographed on CG farmer Nick Rowsell's farm (William Shaw)

Your first payment during 2011 will be made as normal. However, from 30 June 2011 Natural England will be moving to a fixed annual cycle for payments, which means that the timing of some of your payments may be affected. There will still be two payments made for each agreement year and the amount of money paid over the life of your agreement is not affected. Payments for capital works and Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) are also unaffected.

The ES Scheme will also refocus priorities on key environmental issues, such as protecting wildlife and reducing water pollution. As such, the funding for restoring traditional farm buildings has now been capped at £150,000 over three years. The one-off capital payments for projects to improve access to the countryside will no longer be available for new entrants; however farmers with existing agreements will not be affected.

ELS Renewals

Natural England are calling on ELS customers to send in renewals on time. On 1 August, just 43% of expiring agreements had been renewed, far short of the 90% who said that they intended to renew.



A bridge over a ditch forms part of a new foot-path network put in place by CG farmer Peter Boyle as part of the farm's HLS agreement



Licensee update



Jordans ploughs ahead



In October Jordans sponsored the Royston & Buntingford District ploughing match which was held on CG farmer Ralph Parker's land. Sponsoring the match gave Jordans a platform from which to communicate to the media the importance of Conservation Grade farming to the brand, and there reasons for supporting The Prince's Countryside Fund.

After a wet start, the day went really well with around 500 visitors coming along to see what ploughing was all about. Jordans gained a total of 23 articles in the press about the match including; The Times, The Guardian Online, The Mail and The Express to name but a few.

Thank you to Ralph for letting us get involved in the match and making the day go so well for everyone involved.



From September to November Jordans ran TV advertising for Country Crisp and Frusli bars. Bill Oddie provided the voiceover and fronted a competition through Face Book at the same time. Jordans now have over 5000 Face Book fans and the Bill Oddie videos have been viewed almost 150,000 times through You Tube - so a great result!



Suffolk CG farmer Steve Honeywood also produces the CG accredited Honeychop range of horse feeds, and they have just re-designed their packaging.



On the new pack Steve says, "Our feed is made with the finest ingredients, providing the best fibre your horse or pony could need in a palatable and natural form, including oat straw, which we source from Conservation Grade farms, where 10% of the land is dedicated to nature friendly habitats. At Honeychop we firmly believe that the sustainability of our countryside and wildlife is important to everyone, so when you buy from the Honeychop range you are helping to preserve the great British countryside".





Rocketing into first place!

Steve's Leaves® 'SUPER HOT ROCKET' turns over a new leaf and wins first place in "Q" Quality Food Awards 2010

Dr. Steve Rothwell, Technical Director of CG licensee Vitacress Salads Ltd, was delighted to accept the award for his Super Hot Rocket as the winner of the Fresh Produce category at this year's Quality Food Awards in London on Thursday, 10 November. It was notably commended for "its fiery flavour, similar to wasabi" and the brand's "fun and quirky" identity.

Super Hot Rocket is part of the Steve's Leaves new CG branded range of washed and ready to eat bagged leafy salads.



Steve said "We are privileged to have won this award, considering the stiff competition, including other shortlisted products from leading multiples and brands such as Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, The Co-op and Mash Direct. Winning was no walk in the park. The judges attribute our success to innovative flavour, stand out pack design and the convenience of small bag sizes".

There are currently four products in the Steve's Leaves range; Super Hot Rocket, Wild Red Rocket & Milder Leaves, Shoots + Leaves and Baby Watercress. New products are planned for launch in 2011.

Steve and his team are dedicated to sustainable and environmentally friendly farming. The Vitacress farms are the first farms growing fresh salad leaves to hold Conservation Grade/Nature Friendly Farming accreditation.

For more leafy information, stockists and chat visit www.stevesleaves.co.uk

Their 'Baking Mad' at Allinson!



In the Spring 2010 issue of the CG newsletter, we highlighted the launch of Allinson Nature Friendly Flour. The two products of plain flour and self-raising flour have a unique selling point in that they use Conservation Grade wheat.



Once distribution was established, the Allinson marketing team put a communications campaign in place which started last October and ran through into the middle of November. The objective of the campaign was to raise awareness of the two products with consumers and to highlight the benefits to the British countryside of using Conservation Grade flour.

The programme of advertising has been targeted at key women's press and on-line to direct consumers to the Allinson recipe website - www.bakingmad.com.

Two adverts were created, one for plain and one for self-raising flour, which depicted a bag of flour which had spilt open and created a beautiful silhouette of wildlife and flowers. A similar moving advert was created on-line and could be seen on sites such as MSN, BBC Good Food, Netmums, Channel 4 and GMTV.

The success of the campaign will be monitored by brand awareness tracking and sales uplifts in store.





Thompson's topical CG tips by Peter Thompson

Sainfoin

Although this plant has suffered from a lack of recognition for a number of decades, a recent study shows the potential value the addition of sainfoin to farmland flower margins and uncropped land because of its ability to increase the number of pollinators, natural enemies and also by provision of food for farmland birds.

Many important bee species will readily use sainfoin including buff-tailed bumble bee, common carder bumble bee, honey bee, red mason bee, red-tailed bumble bee, white-tailed bumble bee and the wool carder bee.



Peter Thompson

Sainfoin has an extended growth period and flowering time which is highly beneficial for pollinators, feeders and natural enemies. It also has structural diversity with numerous erect stems with leaves similar to vetch and can grow over a metre in height. This is likely to aid the build up of natural enemies, as they are known to increase with structural diversity.

The Latin name for Sainfoin is *Onobrychis* which literally means "devoured by donkeys", and the word Sainfoin is derived from the old French *sain foin* - meaning "healthy hay". Although there is a native Sainfoin, the history of the cultivated crop in the UK goes back to 1652 when it was introduced by a Mr Hartlib. He shipped over a sack of SAINT FOINE from Calais containing two English bushels saying "it has thriven on dry chalk soils, it does not impoverish the land and lasts seven years". It was said sainfoin had one third more value than clover, and its roots strike deep. Dry, warm, deep and rich land the best, but on stony ground it would do very well.



CFE and your uncropped land

The Campaign for the Farmed Environment (CFE) was set up to show Government that farmers in England can produce food while also

delivering wildlife habitats and look after their soil and water, through voluntary measures, rather than having compulsory Setaside forced on us once again. I quite often hear people say "with food shortages and prices where they are, set-aside will never come back". I wonder whether the French said the same thing – as it has been announced that they must have 1% set-aside this year, building up to 5% by 2012.

Obviously all Conservation Grade farmers are leading the way on this front, however you may have areas that are not in a "paid" Stewardship scheme, but are still present on the farm - such as some old set-aside. It would be great if all Conservation Grade farmers could go onto the campaign website and register these areas - www.cfeonline.org.uk as this will inform DEFRA exactly what is happening on farms.

The June Census of Agriculture and Horticulture records is a key time to tell DEFRA exactly what you are doing for conservation on the farm. However, many farmers are worried about committing land to GAEC 12 as they believe it restricts how they can manage it later. Therefore DEFRA have sent out a statement which reads as follows - **'declaring your GAEC 12 land will not restrict how you use your land later in the year, so please declare your uncropped land in the questionnaire which you receive about the June survey of agriculture, horticulture and labour. It will help the Campaign meet its target to increase the level of uncropped land by 20,000ha by July 2012.'**

Soil Protection Reviews 2010

Are you aware that you should have completed your "soil protection review 2010" by the end of the year? If you get an inspection in 2011 and you have not completed this document, it could have quite serious financial implications. Should there be an incident, perhaps a car accident, involving say soil spilling onto a lane during a storm and you have not completed your form, you can most probably forget the backing of your insurance company.

The very first thing I would recommend (and I'm quite sure you have all done this!!) is to buffer any water you have on the farm with an area of unsprayed and unfertilised grass, over and above what is required through Cross Compliance. The Entry level scheme (ELS) offers a 6 metre margin and now also has a brand new option offering payment for 12 metre buffer strips (Ej9 - £400 per hectare) alongside water courses to intercept nutrients and pesticides.

There may also be areas of the farm that are vulnerable to erosion, perhaps on steep slopes or in valley bottoms, that are prone to run-off, even creating gullies of running water during heavy rainfall. If this is the case, and you have just sprayed a residual herbicide or applied your phosphate "top up", it could result in these chemicals landing up in the nearby water course. Another new option to consider in ELS is the "In-field grass area to prevent erosion and run-off" (Ej5 - £350 per hectare) which again counts towards the Campaign.





Supplimentary feeding

When pheasants are fed wheat in their breeding territories, the density of territorial cocks and hens can increase by up to 50%. Fed hens can maintain body condition throughout the nesting period and, if they lose a nest, are

much more likely to re-nest compared with unfed birds. On average, around 85% more chicks are produced to fledging when spring feeding is employed.

Table 1 (below) shows the feed contents of grey partridges during the months of the year. When looking at this table it should be noted that 1g of wheat provides the dry weight food value of 24 pecks of green leaves! Getting enough food quickly enables game birds to maintain condition, to have more time to watch out for predators and, because they are in good condition, react to a potential attack faster. Research has shown that game birds lose weight and condition during these lean months so that come the breeding season in April & May when hen birds have to produce and incubate eggs (and when this causes them to lose weight naturally) many are simply not in good enough condition to breed successfully.

Food	Sept	Oct-Nov	Dec-Feb	Mar-May	Jun-Aug	Mean % for year
Grass, clover & leaves	9.9	26.5	68.0	92.2	14.3	42.2
Flowers & buds	0.9	0.2	0.0	6.0	28.7	7.2
Roots (sugar beet, etc)	0.4	16.4	13.3	0.5	0.0	6.1
Seeds (grasses + weeds)	11.9	34.5	17.8	1.2	38.5	20.8
Grain (all cereals + buckwheat)	76.3	22.4	0.7	0.1	6.5	21.2
Animal food (Mainly insects)	0.6	0.04	0.0	0.02	11.8	2.5

Table 1: Crop contents of wild grey partridges in the 1930s - % volume (GWCT)

So, if possible, continue to feed game birds and therefore many other farmland birds such as finches and buntings that also utilise this food source, up until the end of May.

Rat control at feed hoppers

One of the problems of feeding wheat over winter is that it will undoubtedly attract rats, which if left uncontrolled, will go on to predate the nests of the birds that you have been trying to help! Therefore use this supply of wheat to concentrate rats into an area so that you can poison them. Follow runs from hoppers back to the holes where rats are living. Anticoagulant rat poisons can be used. As meal-based poisons spoil eas-

ily, it may be easier to use block baits. These should be pushed down the holes, which should then be sealed. Check daily for holes being re-opened, and top up and re-seal as appropriate. Also, check the local area for dead rats, remove any carcasses you find and burn or bury deeply to minimise the risk of secondary poisoning. This means that virtually all the rats die underground – away from scavenging wildlife such as Red Kite or Raven.



If you spread grain out rather than hopper feed, move the area a little each time you distribute the grain. A good place is along a farm track, starting at one end and slowly moving along to the other end (and then back!). This will stop rats setting up home around a static food source, whereas birds are happy to be moved around.



Benelux biodiversity specialists visit Thrift Farm

Over 30 specialists from a European project group called SOLABIO enjoyed a trip to Rob Law's Thrift Farm to learn about Conservation Grade. SOLABIO is made up of 27 partners located in Flanders and the Netherlands. The partners are nature-focusing organisations comparable to the RSPB: Natuurpunt, Natuurmonumenten, SOVON; farmer organisations: ZLTO; government agencies: ANB (agency for nature), VLM (agri-environment schemes); non-profit organisations (NGOs): Regionale Landschappen; research institute: INBO.

The group work together to enhance biodiversity on farms and have also created their own biodiversity bread brand called "b. akkerbrood" ("akker" means farmland, "bakker" means bake). Only 90% of the wheat is harvested, the other 10% stays on the field as a hiding spot and winter food for animals, especially farmland birds.

Most of the bread wheat used in Belgium, is imported but SOLABIO work together with local farmers and mills then distribute the flour to local bakeries that make it into authentic bread and pay the farmer a premium. The bread is thus a "short chain" product that supports biodiversity.



***MERRY CHRISTMAS
&
A PROSPEROUS
NEW YEAR
TO YOU ALL
FROM
THE CONSERVATION
GRADE TEAM***

