

CARMARTHENSHIRE LBAP BROWN HARE ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*, Ysgyfarnog) is a widespread but declining species in Britain, which occurs mainly in the agricultural lowlands, although it can be seen up to altitudes of 500 m. At a UK level inhabits both arable and pasture land, although it appears to be most abundant in mixed arable systems. Locally mixed arable is rare and the brown hare appears to prefer the rushy pastures and middle altitude land, i.e. the edges of the uplands.



Hares are generally nocturnal, often feeding in groups on grasses, cereals and root crops. During the day they tend to remain hidden in small scrapes (forms) at ground level. Male hares do not defend territories but will guard individual females during the breeding season, often leading to aggressive encounters.

Hares rely on their ability to run fast and long to escape predators. The fox is considered to be its main natural predator, although owls and other birds of prey will take a leveret.

The brown hare has undergone a marked decline and reduction in its distribution in Carmarthenshire since 1950. Records since 1990 indicate that the majority of populations now occur in hilly, less intensively farmed areas in the north and east of the county; most recent sightings appear to have come from the Cwmann–Rhandirmwyn–Talley area.

The Pembrey peninsula is also important in the county for hares. Congregations of hares are regularly sighted in the open dunes, in rides and glades within the forest itself, and also in the surrounding farmland. It is quite possible that the little-surveyed dune system east of Pendine also supports good numbers of hares.

A perhaps unusual location where this species occurs was at Ffos-las, Trimsaran where it is yet to be seen whether the good numbers that used open land remaining at this restored opencast site after development to a race course.

Loss of habitat diversity in the agricultural landscape, changes in cropping and planting regimes, such as a move from hay to silage, and autumn sowing of cereals are causes for the decline in the hare in Carmarthenshire.

Vision statement and objectives

Within Carmarthenshire our vision for brown hares is have a good understanding of their population size and distribution and to expand the range and increase the numbers of brown hares. This would be by providing the range of interconnected habitats that they need to survive and to work with landowners/organisations to diversify the farmed landscape to provide a wider range of food sources throughout the year. Any action will seek to meet one or more of the following objectives:

HAR1 To maintain and increase the population and range of brown hares in Carmarthenshire

HAR2 To gather data on the distribution and status of brown hares in Carmarthenshire

HAR3 To raise awareness about the brown hare in Carmarthenshire

Summary of action achieved by LBAP Partners (for more information contact the biodiversity officer – Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) or visit the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System - <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk>:

2010–12

- Postcard survey undertaken to promote submission of records – CCC HAR2
- Project to establish core populations in Carmarthenshire – underway – WTSWW HAR2

Proposed future action

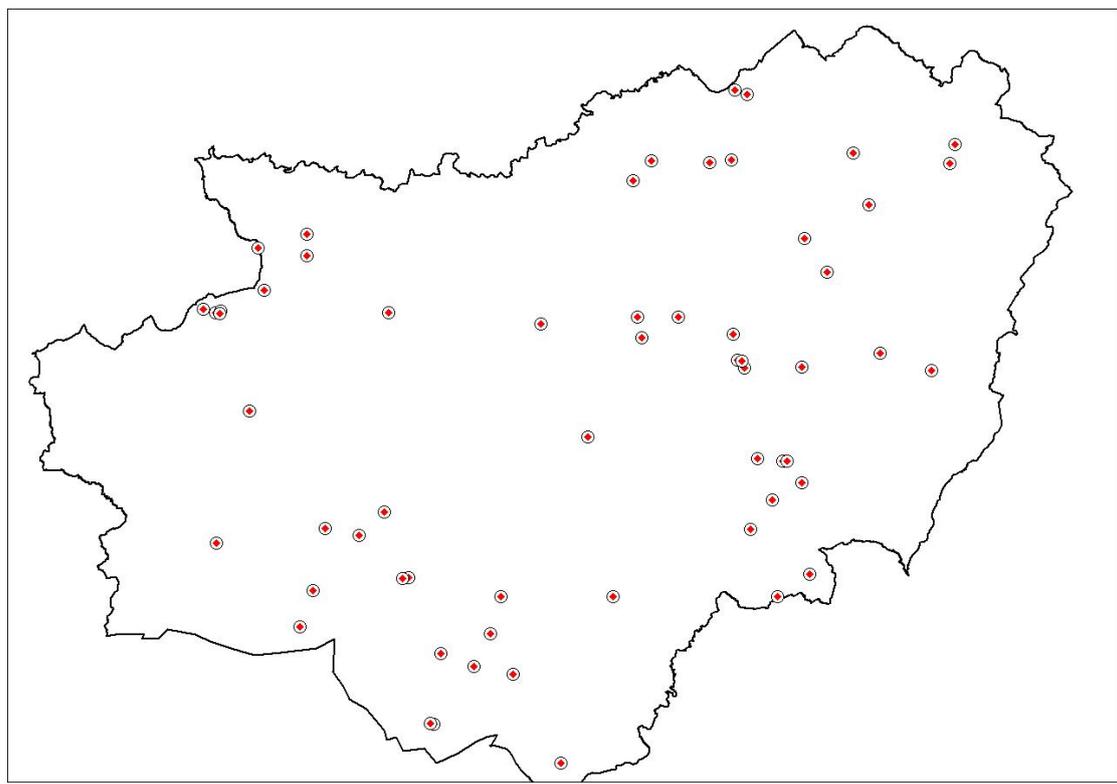
- Advice sheet for landowners on management for hares HAR3
- Promote the presence and the importance of hare in the county – CCC HAR3

Useful links:

- [Hare Preservation Trust](#)
- The Wildlife Trust – the [brown hare](#)
- The Mammal Society - the [brown hare](#)

The brown hare is a creature steeped in magic, mystery and folklore. The Celts worshipped them and during the Middle Ages they were associated with witchcraft and magic - witches were reputed to have the power to change into hares to flee their enemies.

Brown hare records from the postcard survey - 2004 onwards





Partneriaeth **Bioamrywiaeth** Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire **Biodiversity** Partnership

www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk

The [Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership](#) (CBP) is made up of the following organisations: [Carmarthenshire County Council](#) (CCC), [Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales](#) (WTSWW), [Natural Resources Wales](#) (NRW), [RSPB](#), [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) (WWT), [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#) (CBC), [National Botanic Gardens Wales](#) (NBGW), [Butterfly Conservation](#) (BC), [Carmarthenshire Rivers Trust](#) (CRT), [National Trust](#) (NT), [Botanical Society of the British Isles](#) (BSBI), [Llanelli Naturalists](#) (LN), [Bat Conservation Trust](#) (BCT), [West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre](#) (WWBIC), [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation](#) (ARC)