

## Press Release

### **“Get Wild in Devon” scheme benefits visitors and tourism businesses**

Devon’s visitors and tourism businesses are benefiting from a unique scheme to protect and promote the county’s wildlife. The “Get Wild About Devon” initiative has provided local tourism businesses with a free wildlife audit, which details information about local species and habitats for visitors to enjoy. Many local tourism businesses are reporting that the scheme has enhanced their business and has proved to be a valuable tool in encouraging both wildlife and visitors to the area. Visit:

[www.visitdevon.co.uk/site/wildlife](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk/site/wildlife)

25 businesses have taken part in “Get Wild About Devon”, including Wheatland Farm in North Devon which offers award winning self catering accommodation and which actively promotes wildlife to its visitors. Popehouse Moor makes up a third of the farm, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the wildlife audit revealed 200 species of flowering plants such as wild orchids at the site. Maggie Watson who owns Wheatland Farm with husband Ian Ripper, says that the ‘Get Wild’ scheme has given a welcome boost to their business. “The scheme has opened our eyes not just to local wildlife but how we manage our business which has helped us cut costs. We no longer mow our grass as much, which saves us time and money as well as providing a relaxed environment for visitors and the perfect habitat for voles which in turn have attracted Barn Owls to hunt here. It is this sort of information which can be very valuable to businesses, helpful to visitors and it is very easy to organise.” Visit:

[www.wheatlandfarm.co.uk](http://www.wheatlandfarm.co.uk)

Economic Development Officer for Devon County Council Rachel Mildon says that it is not only important for the environment but for the local tourism industry to cherish the wonderful wildlife that is flourishing in Devon: “Devon is renowned for its abundance of wildlife, visitors are attracted to Devon’s natural environment and want to know more about the species of birds, animals and flora that thrive here. Tourism businesses are encouraged to share their wildlife secrets with their visitors, encouraging them to enjoy new trails, discover wildlife hides and in turn learn how to keep Devon special.”

Devon has more than two hundred Sites of Special Scientific Interest, dozens of nature reserves, two distinct coastlines and over thirty-three thousand miles of hedgerow, more than any other county in the UK! In fact, Devon has such a variety of habitats that visitors make special journeys to watch the wintering avocet and the guillemot, the red deer and barn owl or walk along primrose verges and through bluebell woods.

Mazzard Farm in East Devon is an award winning luxury self-catering holiday complex which has been surveyed as part of the scheme. Pipistrelle, Lesser and Greater Horseshoe bats roost in old buildings at the site and visitors can enjoy viewing a wide variety of flora and fauna. Jacqueline Parker who runs Mazzard Farm with her partner Ruud Jansen Venneboer, says that the survey has proved to be invaluable work: “The survey really adds to the total package that we offer visitors, we ourselves were amazed by the sort of wildlife that has been observed here from butterflies to dragonflies. It has already caused a great response from visitors especially families, one family reported that their three year old had spotted “Bambi” in the woods, having used the survey information to locate a group of Roe Deer, we were thrilled. [www.mazzardfarm.com](http://www.mazzardfarm.com)

**Some of Devon’s ‘Get Wild’ tourism businesses include:**

Higher Wiscombe luxury 5\* self-catering cottages are located at the head of the Southleigh Valley in East Devon in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a fifty-

two-acre site with diverse habitats from woodlands to grazing pasture. Higher Wiscombe has a five hundred year old veteran Oak Tree which is listed as a “Great Tree of East Devon.” Five species of bats including, the Greater, Lesser and Horseshoe have been recorded at the site. Fallow and Roe deer are regularly seen here as well as flocks of Redwing, Skylarks and meadow pipits. [www.higherwiscombe.com](http://www.higherwiscombe.com)

Devon’s Crealy Adventure Park near Exeter is a major family tourist attraction, yet just a short distance away from the hubbub and excitement of the park’s main attractions are important habitats for local wildlife. Visitors who stroll around the park’s boating lake will be rewarded by a plethora of fauna and flora. They can listen out for the Great Spotted Woodpecker and the Chiffchaff which sings its own name. Buzzards soar on thermals nearby and butterflies such as Meadow Brown and the Gatekeeper can be seen in grassland areas while the Red Admiral, Peacock and Tortiseshell butterflies can be spotted in the hedgerows. [www.crealy.co.uk](http://www.crealy.co.uk)

Skern Lodge Outdoor Activity Centre in the picturesque village of Appledore, North Devon is a perfect spot to see many sea birds such as Curlew, Oystercatcher, and Dunlin feeding in the fields. While down at the estuary, the Shelduck, Little Egret and the Heron can be seen. The long grass and vegetation provide a welcome habitat for grasshoppers, crickets and even the giant green Bush Cricket. [www.skernlodge.com](http://www.skernlodge.com)

**Note to Editors:**

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