Wildlife trust to save Meadow Farm

20/12/2013

Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a grant of £758,000 to the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). This means that Meadow Farm will be bought by the wildlife trust to establish a three-year project of events and activities at the wildlife site involving local communities and schoolchildren.

Earlier this year over 2,000 people donated £270,000 to an appeal by the wildlife trust to buy Meadow Farm.

BBOWT Chief Executive, Philippa Lyons, paid tribute to the donors: "I am very grateful to everyone who gave so generously. Their contributions provided the matched funding for the Heritage Lottery Fund grant. They have secured the future for Meadow Farm as a very special wildlife haven for local people to enjoy forever. In the New Year we will start planning for community activities and events in the summer so that residents and schoolchildren from Bicester, Aylesbury and the villages of the Upper Ray can discover the beauty of this wildlife haven for themselves."

Across the whole of the UK there are only 1,500 hectares of floodplain wildflower meadows like Meadow Farm. Philippa Lyons added: “Meadow Farm has irreplaceable wildlife habitats that are vital for insects, butterflies and wetland birds such as the curlew. Otters are known to be using the River Ray along the northern boundary and the overgrown hedgerows are superb habitats for the rare black and brown hairstreak butterflies.”

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: “We are delighted to support this project to conserve what is nothing less than an oasis of biodiversity for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. This area of flower meadow that has lain undisturbed for centuries can now be fully protected while providing a valuable learning resource.”

Notes to editors

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is one of 47 wildlife trusts across the UK working to achieve the shared aim of securing a better future for wildlife. BBOWT’s vision is to create a region rich in wildlife and appreciated by all. BBOWT manages 79 nature reserves across the three counties, works with other agencies and individuals to help safeguard the wider countryside, and aims to inspire people to take action for wildlife. BBOWT has over 54,000 members.

Meadow Farm is located in the floodplain of the River Ray. The 28-hectare site has five wildflower meadows and is now part of the trust’s Upper River Ray Living Landscape area.

Meadow Farm, which is near Blackthorn on the Oxfordshire / Buckinghamshire borders, has never been open to the public. The medieval ridge and furrow field patterns show that it hasn’t been cultivated for centuries. For the last 50 years the fields have been cut for hay and grazed with sheep for a few months. This gentle and traditional management means that it has become a precious wildlife site.

Meadow Farm has rare and unusual wild flowers such as true fox sedge and tubular water dropwort. Otters are known to be using the River Ray along the northern boundary, and the wet furrows in the fields make ideal feeding sites for curlew and other wading birds. The overgrown hedgerows are superb habitats for the rare black and brown hairstreak butterflies.

Further information

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