

Be(e) part of the 2014 Pollinator Survey on 8 June

For the third consecutive year, the National Farm Pollinator Survey will be a key element of Open Farm Sunday. Led by scientists from the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), this important research is helping to build a greater understanding of the role insects play in pollinating crops. LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), the organiser of Open Farm Sunday is calling on farmers to take part in the survey and partner with local experts such as entomologists and wildlife enthusiasts, to help visitors get involved and get counting insects on the 8th June.

Visitors to farms participating in the Pollinator Survey on Open Farm Sunday farms will be asked to count the number and type of insects they see in different habitats - both field margins and crops. Scientists from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology will be supported on farms by fellow experts from the British Ecological Society and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, but key to the success of the survey is the widespread participation of the public and local experts.

Insects like bees, wasps, hoverflies and butterflies are critical for the growth of 80% of crops like fruit and vegetables that are vital to British farmers. Annabel Shackleton, Open Farm Sunday Manager at LEAF said: "We are delighted that this excellent example of citizen science is once again a part of Open Farm Sunday. However we know that both the results of the survey and visitors' experience are enhanced when it is run by a team of experts – which is why we would like to encourage farmers to invite scientists, entomologists and wildlife enthusiasts along on the day to take part, by contacting local organisations or universities. We can provide posters, children's activity sheets and other collateral to help with the survey too."

Dr Helen Roy from CEH, who is leading the research in conjunction with LEAF said: "It has been wonderful to see so many people getting involved with the Pollinator Survey over the last few years. By working together we have counted tens of thousands of insects and as by collecting information year on year we can begin to explore the patterns in the ecology of insects on farmland. The more volunteers we have on each farm the better, so I hope many of my fellow insect experts and enthusiasts will join up with their local farm."

There is still time for farmers to register for Open Farm Sunday which can be done by visiting www.farmsunday.org. You can also order resources and find out more about the Pollinator Survey.

The National Pollinator Survey is supported by Cotswold Seeds who supply a wide range of seeds to farmers to help them create the best possible habitats for wildlife.

- Ends -

For up-to-date campaign information and to let us know about your plans for Open Farm Sunday, follow us on Twitter - twitter.com/openfarmsunday

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Editor's note:

- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) is the leading organisation delivering more sustainable food and farming. It works with farmers, the food industry, scientists and consumers to inspire and enable sustainable farming that is prosperous, enriches the environment and engages local communities. LEAF has organised Open Farm Sunday since it began in 2006. (Registered charity no: 1045781)
- The ninth annual Open Farm Sunday on 8th June 2014 provides a great opportunity for people to truly get to know how their food is produced and how the countryside around them is cared for.
- The third national farm Pollinator Survey, supported by the British Ecological Society, NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust will once again be carried out on selected Open Farm Sunday farms. Visitors will be asked to count the number and type of insects they see in different habitats, which will help scientists understand more about this vital process.
- Alongside Open Farm Sunday, farms across Britain will also be hosting Open Farm School Days. Running from the 2nd to 13th June, they will provide thousands of school children with the opportunity to visit a farm to learn more about where their food comes from and how it is produced.
- Sponsors for Open Farm Sunday 2014 include: **Asda, BASF, Country Life butter, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, Kellogg's, LEAF Marque, Marks and Spencer, National Farmers Union, Syngenta, Tesco, The Co-operative, Waitrose, plus Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (from its BPEX, DairyCo, Eblex, HDC and HGCA divisions) and Hellmann's.**
- Keep up to date with LEAF's activities via twitter www.twitter.com/LEAF_Farming and our regular blogs at leafmarque.wordpress.com.