



# Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan

## Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan News Issue 3– June 2006

Welcome to the third edition of the Wiltshire BAP news. This newsletter is provided to update you on the status of the Wiltshire BAP and give you a flavour of how its implementation is progressing. If you have any queries or wish to know more information about any of the articles (or the many things going on that we haven't been able to mention!) please do not hesitate to contact us.

### Wiltshire BAP Coordination – staffing changes

Since the last edition there has been a change in staff working on the Wiltshire BAP. Amber Rosenthal left to explore the wilds of Africa and our new Biodiversity Support Officer is Allison Hulbert who joined us in November last year. Allison came from English Nature in Peterborough where she worked on SSSI notifications.

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### A year on!

Last year's Forum meeting in June was a tremendous success. We had lots of positive feedback and encouragement and an abundance of ideas resulting from the workshops.

We had lively workshop sessions on 'Involving the Community', 'Landscape Scale Conservation' and 'Creating wider partnerships'.

News on a couple of the great ideas that now have been turned into reality:

- \* It was suggested that more Local authority in-house ecological expertise was required and with thanks to WCC, English Nature, Salisbury DC and North Wiltshire DC a Senior Ecologist is being recruited for the four Wiltshire Districts!
- \* Business contacts were made with Devizes Chamber of Commerce and other contacts made to facilitate future working with a wider business community. For example to signpost for providing help with biodiversity management, for funding, as champions for particular habitats or species and as supporters of a local BAP grant scheme.... *learn more about this at the Forum meeting, or contact Amanda.*



Male Tree Sparrows

## FORUM MEETING

WEDNESDAY JUNE 28th 2006

9:15am – 4:00pm

Dinton Village Hall

Join us to hear the latest in Landscape Scale thinking from Plantlife International; find out how the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan is progressing and how we plan to facilitate more action!

We hope to see as many partners represented as possible on the day which will also include an introduction to the Regional Nature Map and local site visits to BAP habitats where you can test out your survey skills and/or find out more about what makes a habitat notable.

You should have received an invitation in the last week or so, please let us know if you can make it by 9th June 2006.

An agenda is included with this newsletter – for more copies or to discuss arrangements for the day please contact Amanda or Allison.

## National, Regional, Local News

### National Reporting & Target Reviews

The national reporting round by local BAP partnerships and national Lead Partners\* was completed in early January onto the new online reporting system BARS (Biodiversity Action Reporting System). A report will be produced by the end of June which will show the national trends and progress of the UKBAP.

The national targets review was undertaken by Lead Partners and the draft targets (at time of printing) are to be circulated to Country and Regional Biodiversity Partnerships for consultation.

\* Lead Partners are nationally nominated organisations responsible for specific species or habitat plans e.g. Environment Agency are Lead Partner for Water Vole.

### South West Regional Nature Map

Nature Map was produced by the South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership. It selects landscape scale blocks of land, known as Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs), to improve habitat networks and to sustain wildlife within them. This was achieved through regional consultation using the best available biodiversity data, local expert knowledge and the South West Wildlife Trust's Rebuilding Biodiversity methodology. There will be a talk at the forthcoming Forum meeting and you can find out more on the following web site

[www.swenvo.org.uk/nature\\_map/nature\\_map.asp](http://www.swenvo.org.uk/nature_map/nature_map.asp)

### Landscape Scale Successes

Two excellent land acquisitions by Conservation organisations took place in Wiltshire over the past year, bringing BAP species and habitat under secure conservation management. RSPB acquired a 296ha farm in south Wiltshire. Manor Farm will be the hub of RSPB operations in Wessex, providing a demonstration site for large-scale arable reversion to **chalk grassland** and providing secure breeding and feeding habitat for **stone-curlews**. WWT acquired Lower Moor Farm which adjoins the WWT-owned Clattinger farm in the north of the County. Important **standing open water** habitat has developed from the restored gravel workings and one of the lakes has 3 rare **stonewort** species. **Marsh Fritillary** have also been recorded on this farm.

As well as purchasing land another major success that will influence areas within the Braydon Forest of up to 7,800ha is the Rebuilding Biodiversity in North Wiltshire Project that received a very generous grant from the Tubney Charitable Trust (and support from the Hills Group, WCC, NWDC and Charitable Trusts) to work with landowners to restore networks of **neutral grassland**, **lowland broad-leaved woodland** and **ancient species-rich hedgerow** across the area. In addition this project will focus on 9 UK-BAP species including **spotted flycatcher**, **great crested newt** and **water vole**.

Blue = UK or Wiltshire BAP species or habitat

## Habitat Action Plans Update

**Farmland HAP**—The Farmland HAP has seen some fantastic achievements regarding farmland birds. A collaborative effort between many of the partners has seen the 2006 target for 210 breeding pairs of **tree sparrows** exceeded and the 2008 target for winter flock size already reached. Elsewhere in Wiltshire, the success story of the RSPB's Wessex **stone-curlew** recovery project is on-going with 68 breeding pairs last year, beating the target of 66 breeding pairs in Wiltshire by 2010.

Wiltshire is also an important county for scarce arable plants and a survey set up by FWAG and the Wiltshire Botanical Society found some real rarities, including Pheasant's eye and Corn buttercup. The Farmland Biodiversity Project is working with farmers to secure the sites of these plants through suitable management practices and is continuing the survey this year.

The continued uptake of Environmental Stewardship will facilitate further progress to be made on the Farmland HAP.

**Unimproved Neutral Grassland HAP** — work started on the restoration of the grassland at WWTs Blakehill reserve in 2002, with suitable grazing now in place by 4 breeds of hardy native cattle. Also green hay spreading and seed broadcasting has taken place. This important area equates to for 45% of the UKBAP neutral grassland BAP restoration target!

**Calcareous Grassland HAP**— Excellent progress has been made on the target to secure favourable management of all sites supporting protected species. This is especially notable on Salisbury Plain and Porton Down, and has been delivered through the LIFE partnership.

A full summary of progress to date on all Action Plans will be published shortly.

## Monitoring, Reporting & Communication

### Monitoring

Monitoring forms were sent out, to those people who are in a position to report on progress of the Wiltshire BAP, last autumn, were collected this spring, and Allison has been working to summarise the progress towards targets and actions to inform the production of a progress report.

### Reporting

The process of summarising the data and examining cumulative progress since 2002 is a fairly challenging one, but at last the end is in sight! Initial indications suggest that progress over the period 2003-2005 has been unremitting – with many BAP Working Groups managing to complete several targets and actions. The Progress Report 2003-2005 will be available very soon, and will highlight the key achievements of the BAP. Additionally, it will indicate opportunities and constraints that will inform a review of the BAP.

### Reviewing

Now is the perfect time to review our BAP, as national targets are currently under review (see above left). The process is now underway in Wiltshire, and is expected to take 18 months. Our initial thoughts are that the new BAP should be a flexible document which could be integrated into policy, with easily accessible sections for planners, business and communities within each HAP/SAP. The review process will be informed by, and compatible with the national target review and Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS). Whilst the Wiltshire BAP should indicate work that is ongoing it will emphasize "added value" which can be delivered by the partnership. Both Regional Nature Map and climate change will be referenced throughout. This review will undergo substantial consultations and any members of the Forum who may wish to get more closely involved should contact Amanda.



Pheasants Eye—T. Reynolds

