

Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan News

Welcome to the seventh edition of Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan News.

The past year has been an incredibly busy period for the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Partnership, with the review of the Wiltshire BAP now complete. Read on to find out more.....



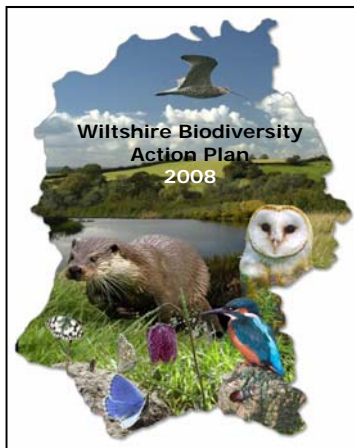
Issue 7 June 2008

A Warm Welcome to our New Volunteers...

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our four new BAP volunteers, Jane Ashworth, Amy Cahillane, Sue Sawyer and Leonie Washington Campbell who have been assisting the Biodiversity Action Plan Team in Wiltshire & Swindon

Revised Wiltshire BAP Published!

The revised Wiltshire BAP is now complete and will be officially launched on June 26th at Langford Lakes Nature Reserve.



The new document represents the comprehensive revision of the Wiltshire BAP 2002 over the past year. Huge thanks go to the 78 members of the Wiltshire BAP Partnership who were involved in the review workshops (representing about 40 different organisations) and the massive 101 people from around 50 different organisations or groups who provided comments.

The revised BAP is available in hard copy, on CD or as a PDF. The PDF version can either be emailed to you or you will shortly be able to download it from www.biodiversitywiltshire.org.uk.

To cover costs, hard copies will be charged at £20 each. Please contact Sarah Wilkinson on 01380 725670 if you would like to purchase a hard copy or would like to be sent the PDF version by email.

New Orchards Project

Traditional orchards are now a new priority habitat under the UK BAP. As part of the revised Wiltshire BAP, a Habitat Action Plan has been included for traditional orchards. Old orchards form a patchwork of grassland, woodland, hedgerow, scrub and wood pasture and because of their sheer diversity; they offer a home to everything from beetles to orchids, bats to fungi, and birds to dormice.

As part of the new Orchards HAP a new volunteer Orchards Project is being set up and run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Recording Centre (WSBRC). This project will confirm the locations of what are thought to be around 500 orchards in the county, using aerial photography and then begin to survey them. The first step for this new project is to recruit a volunteer to help coordinate it.



*Apple tree and Mistletoe
© Rob Large*

The project also aims to raise the profile of orchards and of traditional Wiltshire apple varieties, and to encourage people to get involved in the conservation of their local orchards.

Countdown 2010 Funding Opportunity

Natural England have announced the launch of a new Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund. They have secured £5 million for the next three years to fund projects that can demonstrate how they will provide benefits to BAP priority species and habitats in England through working at a landscape-scale, developing an evidence base, protecting the best sites, working in partnership and being sustainable.

The application process is open from 22 May to 18 July 2008. Funding is available for projects requiring between £25k to £250k per year and awards to successful applicants will be announced in September.

Full details are available online at: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/grants-funding/countdown.htm> or from Trudie Mills on 01733 455185 or via email at: countdown2010@naturalengland.org.uk

Watch this space for more information about the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Grant—a small grants scheme that the Wiltshire Biodiversity Partnership hopes to be able to launch later this year.

Contact us!

Sarah Wilkinson: sarahwilk@wiltshirewildlife.org; Bill Jenman: billj@wiltshirewildlife.org

National Biodiversity Reporting 2008

The next 3-yearly national BAP reporting round begins in September 2008 and will cover all the original UK BAP priority species and habitats (i.e. not the new Priority Species and Habitats that were added to the list published in 2007). Reports will also be required for those species that were removed from the list of UK BAP priorities in 2007. This is needed to ensure comparison with the 2002 and 2005 Reporting Round data and to inform reporting on the UK's international 2010 target commitments.

Wiltshire & Swindon BAP volunteers are currently working hard to enter progress reports from both BAPs onto the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS), as well as all the new tables and actions from the revised Wiltshire BAP, so that both partnerships can feed in easily to this national reporting.

Swindon BAP Review

The review of the Swindon BAP is now underway and a launch event was held in May to discuss the process with the Swindon BAP partnership. During June and July a series of workshops will be held to review the current Swindon BAP action tables. This will also feed into the 3 year National Reporting round that begins in September 2008 - see above. Following this series of meetings the initial draft tables will be circulated much more widely, to ensure that once again a cross section of views and opinions is achieved. The updated action tables will be available from February 2009.

In addition to the action within the Swindon Biodiversity Action Plan (SBAP) the SBAP Steering Group is also seeking to update the biodiversity actions in the Swindon Climate Change Action Plan (SCCAP) and both the SBAP and SCCAP steering groups are leading this process. The Climate Change Action Plan table will be published both in the SCCAP but also as adjunct to the SBAP.

Neil Pullen - Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

County Wildlife Sites

198 national indicators were recently published by government in order to benefit service delivery, and these indicators will be implemented on a local level through Local Area Agreements (LAA). Indicator 197 is particularly significant as it aims to improve local biodiversity by actively managing local sites.

This is a major development, as for the first time ever if NI197 is adopted, there is a requirement for local government to report on the proportion of County Wildlife Sites (CWS) under positive conservation management. CWS are essentially all the high value sites for wildlife which are not designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). There will be a requirement for annual reporting, which will allow us to see how Wiltshire's habitats are changing over time.

There are 1475 Wildlife sites in the Wiltshire area excluding Swindon and in addition to this monitoring requirement, Wiltshire's LAA has adopted a target of increasing the proportion of CWS in appropriate management by 13% by 2011 (3% for year 1 and 5% for years 2 and 3 from a baseline of 39.5%). Meeting this target will take a concerted effort from a number of the members of the BAP partnership.

Charles Routh - Natural England

Next National BAP Conference

The next national LBAP conference will be held on the 15th, 16th and 17th July 2008 at St John's College in Cambridge and will be hosted by Natural England, Defra and Plantlife. Important topics include, UK BAP HAPs and SAPs, and business and biodiversity.

For further information and to register your place online, please go to www.keystone-group.co.uk/lbap. Places are limited.

NERC Act (2006) Section 41 List

Defra have recently announced the publication of the list of "habitats and species of principal importance in England". 56 habitats and 941 species are included on the S41 list under Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006

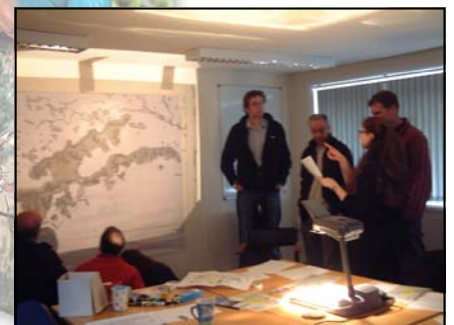
The England Biodiversity List will be used to guide decision makers in implementing their duty under section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions. Further details regarding the S41 list can be found online at <http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/news/details.asp?X=45>.

Nature Map Visioning Workshop

The Wiltshire BAP Partnership have recently held two visioning workshops to produce a vision for the Ebbles Chalk Valley Strategic Nature Area (SNA) in South Wiltshire. Results from the workshops will be published soon.

Funding to hold the workshops was provided by Biodiversity South West, and partnership the workshops focused on a set of chalk SNA's which are in the heart of a new project just beginning at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust called "New Life on the Chalk" which is being led by Catherine Hosie.

The new project will focus on rebuilding biodiversity throughout Wiltshire's chalk grassland and will run alongside the existing Landscapes for Wildlife Rebuilding Biodiversity in North Wiltshire team presently within the Trust.



Nature Map Visioning Workshop
© Sarah Wilkinson

Chalk Country Connections

The RSPB is embarking on an ambitious project aiming to work with partners and landowners in the “Wiltshire Chalk Country” around Salisbury Plain and Porton Down. The aim is to create a safe haven for nesting stone-curlews on semi-natural habitat, by establishing landscape scale areas of flower-rich chalk grassland linking the two largest remaining tracts in the UK.

Strategically this helps form a geographical link between two downland strategies of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB and the North Wessex Downs AONB. The RSPB is also looking forward to working with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to complement the restoration of neglected chalk grasslands being proposed in the “New Life for Chalk Grassland” project.

As a corner stone of this vision, the RSPB has already established two nature reserves in this area. At RSPB Normanton Down, 46 ha of arable land has been reverted to grassland. The RSPB has set up a nature reserve agreement with the owners, and removed scrub from the barrows to allow the ancient chalk flora to flourish under a sympathetic grazing regime.

The RSPB owned, Winterbourne Downs nature reserve occupies a key location between Porton Down and Salisbury Plain. Over the next five years the RSPB plans to create a total of over 160 ha of flower-rich chalk grassland. The reversion program is underway with 41 hectares of chalk grassland sown in 2006, and a further 22 hectares in 2007. The transformation to flower-rich grasslands has begun with 33 sown species recorded in the first year. Wildlife is already starting to take advantage of these new habitats; with the marbled white and common blue butterflies being the most conspicuous.

The RSPB is grateful for the support of Natural England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the SITA Trust in getting this exciting biodiversity project running.

Patrick Cashman—RSPB



Clustered Bellflower
© Patrick Cashman, RSPB

Stone-Curlews Looking Strong

Since the last BAP targets were set in 2002, Wiltshire’s stone-curlew population has increased beyond expectations. In fact, the 2010 target of 66 breeding pairs was achieved in 2005 and success continued into 2007 when figures rose to 85 pairs.

This has been made possible by a partnership of conservation organisations. Natural England, Defra, the MoD and the RSPB are working with Wiltshire’s farmers to provide the right nesting and feeding habitat and species protection for successful breeding.

Challenges ahead include; The loss of set-aside, difficulties in the delivery of agri-environment schemes, rising revenues from cereals, and ever increasing development pressures. These combined issues mean that stone-curlews will find it more difficult to find space in the Wiltshire landscape and this reason, the RSPB see the aim of the next BAP period as one of consolidation for stone-curlews. Whilst we do hope to see a continued rise in the population, targets are set with the objective of securing a place for the birds in the Wiltshire Chalk Country with habitat targets, specifically in a semi-natural environment.



Stone-curlew chick
© Phil Sheldrake RSPB

Phil Sheldrake—RSPB

Action for the River Kennet (ARK) Crayfish Campaign

Action for River Kennet (ARK) and Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall’s River Cottage Team, recently ran a televised experimental crayfish trapping exercise to assess the impact of intensive trapping on the American Signal Crayfish in the River Kennet.

20 traps were set along a 40m stretch of river and checked and emptied every day. Over 13 days approximately 140 crayfish were caught. The expected decline over time in the size and number of Signal Crayfish was not observed, suggesting that the removal of 140 crayfish had no significant impact on the population.

Signal Crayfish have almost wiped out our native Crayfish by out-competing them and because they carry a deadly virus that devastates the native population. In order to ‘fish out’ this accidentally introduced alien species along a given stretch of river, hundreds of traps would need to be set.



Filming on the Kennet © ARK

The next phase of this campaign is to set sampling traps in the upper Kennet to assess crayfish distribution. Once a suitable location has been established, it is ARK’s intention to run a large, community project, with lots of local volunteers, to fish out a section of river and monitor the impact of intensive trapping on invertebrates and weed growth.

If you or anyone you know would like to be involved with the project please email: crayfish@riverkennet.org

Early Gential Survey

A partnership event involving three botanical societies and Plantlife took place locally on Sat 7th June. 34 botanists from Wilts Botanical Society, Hampshire Flora Group, Dorset Flora Group and Plantlife searched for Early Gential over Martin and Pentridge Downs.

The Downs are split by county boundaries, hence the partnership work. Despite some disappointments, one area contained good numbers and 81 plants were recorded overall. Other stunning wild flowers were seen along the way, including orchids such as Burnt-tipped, Fragrant, Greater Butterfly and Bee, and other rarities such as Field Fleawort. Adonis and Small Blue butterflies were also spotted.

Tim Wilkins-Plantlife



Rivermead Launch

A launch event took place at Rivermead in Swindon on Tuesday 17th June to celebrate the end of a 5 year project to create a space in the heart of Swindon for people and wildlife.



The project was funded by Biffa, Sita, EA, SBC, and Hills and involved renaturalising the river and creating meanders, pools and riffles.

Clouts Wood Celebration

On Sunday 3rd August 2008 from 2.00 to 5.00pm the purchase of Clouts Wood by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust will be officially celebrated.

There will be a number of stalls, children's activities and opportunities to meet the experts and get a closer look at the diverse range of wildlife found in the woods.

The event is free and parking is available at the Ellundune Centre in Wroughton.

Cream teas will be available for the first 200 guests. To book a cream tea or for more information please contact Amy Cahillane on 01793 814743 or via email on AmyC@wiltshirewildlife.org

Updates from the Cotswold Water Park

Water Vole Recovery Project

In April 2008, a Project Officer was employed by the CWPSoc specifically to implement the water vole and otter Biodiversity Action Plans under the new CWP Biodiversity Action Plan 2007-2016. This dedicated post has allowed the already successful mink control programme to expand to include the River Leach. Over the next two years, water vole surveys of the CWP will be undertaken and the results compared to previous surveys to determine just how effective the mink control programme and habitat enhancements have been.



If you would like any further information about this project please contact Dr Phoebe Carter, Biodiversity Field Officer, Cotswold Water Park Society on 01793 752413 or phoebe.carter@waterpark.org.

Cotswold Water Park Dragonfly Atlas 2008: Off to a flying start!

During the review of the CWP BAP, a new Species Action Plan was added for Dragonflies & Damselflies. In response to this, the Cotswold Water Park Society launched a CWP Dragonfly Atlas Project in April 2008. This is being undertaken in partnership with the National Dragonfly Atlas Project and the British Dragonfly Society, The Wiltshire Dragonfly Atlas and Gloucestershire Naturalist's Society.

Things are off to a flying start! Within only a few weeks of the project launch, two new species have been added to the CWP species list; the Beautiful Demoiselle and the Hairy Dragonfly. The Beautiful Demoiselle is a fairly widespread species, but has not been recorded in the CWP area for perhaps 15 years or more. The Hairy Dragonfly is a more exciting find, with only one other population known in Gloucestershire and none known in Wiltshire!

Furthermore, populations of Downy Emeralds in the Cotswold Water Park also appear to be expanding, with two new locations supporting this species found in June already!! This is a nationally scarce species, so to see it doing so well in the CWP is fantastic!

For further information see http://www.waterpark.org/society/dragonfly_atlas.html or <http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/home.html>, or contact Gareth Harris, Biodiversity Officer, Cotswold Water Park Society.