



Dragonflies

Dinosaurs of the insect world

BBC prize winner

English Nature wins award for
wildlife-friendly gardening tips

Hunt for fungi

Join in the search for
endangered mushrooms

Green transport

A new vision for an environment
friendly transport system

English Nature is the statutory body which achieves, enables and promotes nature conservation in England.

We do so by working in partnership with individuals and a wide range of organisations including Government, representative bodies, agencies and voluntary organisations.

English Nature Magazine is published six times a year to promote nature conservation in England and make people aware of the latest developments. The views expressed in it by individuals are not necessarily those of English Nature.

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We operate a number of other offices across the country, from where our staff deal with local nature conservation issues.

Details of your nearest office can be obtained by phoning Northminster House, or by requesting a copy of English Nature Facts and Figures Information guide, free from the Enquiry Service at Northminster House, Tel 01733 455100.

You can also learn more about us via the Internet. Our address is: www.english-nature.org.uk



Awarded for excellence

Cover picture



Cover photographer: S. Ball

Scarce chaser – one of seven vulnerable species. (see the full article on pages 6 and 7)



brief update

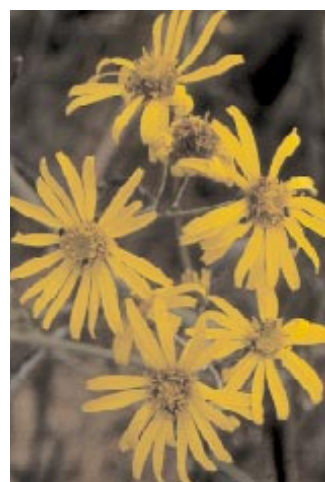
Rare plant is given a lifeline

One of England's rarest wild plants, once thought to be extinct, has been given a second chance at survival through a project set up by English Nature and Anglian Water.

A single fen ragwort plant, thought to be the only one in existence, was discovered in east Cambridgeshire 30 years ago. Plants from its seeds have now been used by the project to grow a nursery of plants at Flag Fen – a Bronze Age excavation site at Anglian Water's wastewater treatment works in Peterborough. The nursery, which has been cultivated by

Tim Pankhurst, Consultant Botanist for English Nature, will provide a source of fen ragwort for reintroduction to other sites and will allow visitors to see the plant without endangering it in the wild.

Dave Stone, English Nature's Species Recovery Programme Manager, said, "This is a really exciting venture. The small fen ragwort we planted at Flag Fen just a few months ago is now approaching two metres tall, with hundreds of bright yellow flowers. We hope this nursery will promote the return of a once familiar sight across the fens.



Second chance - the fen ragwort

It is timely that in the 10th anniversary year of our Species Recovery Programme we are able to see a future for one of our rarest plants."

Peter Wakely, English Nature

Is your place booked?

Those seeking a place at the forthcoming English Nature Species Recovery Programme Conference are requested to apply soon or risk missing out on one of the key events in the wildlife calendar. The annual conference, which is due to last for three days, is this year all the more important in that it celebrates the tenth anniversary of the programme.

Over 200 people have so far expressed an interest in taking part in the celebrations, due to be held between December 5 and 7 at The Hayes Conference Centre, Derbyshire. In all, English Nature would like to welcome up to 300 guests. Partners involved in the programme include the RSPB, Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Plantlife, local authorities, independent ecological consultants and volunteers.



The pine marten – one of many on the Species Recovery Programme

The event will kick-off with guest speakers, followed by awards presented to partners who have made outstanding contributions to the Species Recovery Programme. Day two will see visitors taking part in workshops and discussing a variety of topics central to current and future work. The final day will be dedicated to guests taking part in a 'Question Time'-style debate.

English Nature Biodiversity Support Officer Trudie Mills

said, "We wanted to do something special to celebrate the programme's 10th year, so we thought we would run the conference over three days. It just gives everyone a chance to get together and talk about the different projects that the programme covers."

Anyone interested in taking part in the event should contact Trudie on 01733 455112 or at trudie.mills@english-nature.org.uk.

Paul Glendel, English Nature

Launch of fisherman's guide

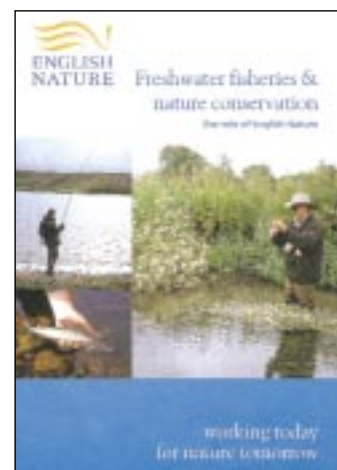
As a keen fisherman, it gave English Nature's Chief Executive David Arnold-Forster great pleasure in launching the Agency's latest publication on how angling and nature conservation can work hand-in-hand.

The 12-page booklet, entitled *Freshwater fisheries and nature conservation – the role of*

English Nature, provides a broad overview of English Nature's position on important and topical issues facing our ponds, lakes and streams.

Mr Arnold-Forster said: "Across the country there are shining examples of how good river management for fishing and for conservation go hand in hand. Partnerships of angling clubs, riparian owners and conservation bodies are doing vital work to help secure the future of such species as otters, kingfishers and native crayfish."

The booklet is available on-line at www.englishnature.org.uk/pubs/publication/pdf/fisheries.pdf or free from English Nature Enquiry Service on 01733 455100, enquiries @english-nature.org.uk



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Name

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10-year celebration for bog NNR



English Nature recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of its restoration of Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses National Nature Reserve (NNR), which straddles the English/Welsh border, by extending the area a further 49 hectares, and by launching three nature trails across the site. The trails were launched in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales and British Waterways.

NEWS IN SHORT

Spider atlas on sale

A handbook for fans of creepy-crawlies has been produced by Loughborough Naturalist Club, in association with English Nature and the Environment Agency. *Spiders of Leicestershire and Rutland – The Millennium Atlas* is an extension of an existing atlas published in 1996 and has 120 pages. It features over 300 species, including rare spiders like the Charnwood spider, which live on a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Leicestershire. The book costs £14 and is available from Kairos Press on 01530 242959.

New SSSIs confirmed

Representatives from proposed Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) had the opportunity to air their views at English Nature's July council meeting. Part of a more open approach being adopted by English Nature, this will also give members more information to decide whether to approve SSSIs in their final stages. Bramshill in Hampshire, Breckland Farmland and Breckland Forest in Suffolk and Norfolk and Minsterley Meadows in Shropshire, were approved for SSSI status at the meeting, which was held at Forest Pines Hotel, Broughton, near Scunthorpe on July 11. The next council meeting will be held on September 25 in The Castle Green Hotel, in Kendal, Cumbria.

Dinosaur dig

A Site of Special Scientific Interest recently gave up some prehistoric treasures after English Nature gave the BBC permission to excavate for dinosaur fossils as part of a television documentary. English Nature Conservation Officer Andy Gordon gave permission for the BBC crew and team of experts to disturb the 16km of south coastline on the Isle of Wight for the week-long documentary, entitled "Live From Dinosaur Island". This, Britain's biggest ever dinosaur dig, was attended by experts from all over the world.

brief update

NEWS IN SHORT

Council members wanted

DEFRA is looking to appoint three people to serve on English Nature's Council, starting on April 1 2002. Appointments are for three years, and members are expected to spend 2½ days per month on English Nature business.

Applicants should have a personal interest in the conservation of wildlife and natural features, an understanding of the issues faced by English Nature, and the ability to offer innovative and pragmatic solutions to complex and sensitive problems. Interest or expertise in environmental law, land management, rural business involving wildlife or the voluntary sector of nature conservation is particularly sought. Further information about English Nature is available at www.english-nature.org.uk

For an application form and further background information, contact DEFRA, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/06b, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EB. Otherwise telephone 0117 372 8571, fax 0117 372 8642 or email alison.burtenshaw@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Application forms should be returned by 11 October this year.

Open doors at the JNCC

The Joint Conservation Committee (JNCC), which is staffed and funded by English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage, will start opening its committee meetings to the public from September. The committee is responsible for advice and research on nature conservation in the UK and internationally, and for ensuring common standards in UK nature conservation. The first open meeting will be held on September 27 at 11.30am at Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough. The agenda, papers and a map can be viewed on JNCC's website at www.jncc.gov.uk or contact June Swift on 01733 866900, e-mail june.swift@jncc.gov.uk.

Re-launch New Forest book

An important conservation book – *The New Forest* – is being re-launched in memory of the late Colin Tubbs, its author and a noted English Nature ecologist.

Based in Lyndhurst, Hampshire, Colin worked for the organisation for over 30 years as a Conservation Officer, protecting the New Forest and its wide range of wildlife. He put together the book, outlining the laws, administration, history and natural environment of the forest, in his spare time and it was published in 1985 as part of the Collins New Naturalist series.

Colin took early retirement in 1993, along with his wife Jenni who also worked for English Nature, and updated the 17 chapters over the next three years. Unfortunately, Colin died in 1997 before he was able to re-launch the book, but Jenni was determined to carry out her husband's last wishes.

She said, "I felt an obligation to re-publish the book because of the work my husband had put into revising it and because of the demand for the book, which is currently out of print."

The revised book, entitled *The New Forest – History Ecology and Conservation*, should be available at the end of October for around £18 (paperback) and £35 (hardback) from bookshops and the New Forest Museum, High Street,

Lyndhurst, Hampshire, SO43 7NY. Pre-publication hardback copies are also available now from the museum for £28.50.



Launch of 'Ecobase'



All smiles – English Nature's Phil Page (left) and John Wych, of Transco.

A newly built 'ecobase' is now the workplace of English Nature staff based at Yarner Wood in Dartmoor National Park. Constructed mainly from timber, the building, which contains offices and a workshop, was designed to have a minimum impact on the environment.

As well as being used as a focus for the management of the East Dartmoor Woods and Heaths National Nature Reserve, the ecobase will also

be used to educate visitors and local decision makers about the sustainability of such an eco-friendly design. It was officially opened by English Nature Council Member Mike Moser on August 2.

The base is well insulated, and non-toxic and non-polluting materials have been used for the structure. The building has been built into the valley side which helps it to retain heat whilst providing disabled access to the upper floor.

There is no mains water supply in the ecobase, but clean water is available in the form of filtered rainwater. The site receives over 50 inches of rain each year and this will be collected and stored in the building. Also, an 'ecobog' – a dry composting toilet – will ensure that no sewage is released into any rivers or streams.

Having moved from a temporary Portakabin, their base for the past two years, the three permanent staff members are more than happy with their new accommodation. "It's a brilliant working environment, especially compared with what we had before," said Site Manager Phil Page. "The fact that it is so environmentally-friendly is an added bonus!"

All aboard for a green transport system

English Nature has just unveiled its latest position statement on providing England with an environmentally-friendly transport system. For the first time, it requests specific actions from the Government. And ministers seem to be committed to working hand-in-hand with English Nature.

A recent example was when English Nature welcomed the decision by Minister for Transport, John Spellar to reject proposals from the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) to build two environmentally damaging bypasses in Hastings.

The proposal emerged from the first of the Multi-Modal Studies, commissioned by the Government as part of its £180 billion ten-year transport plan.

The new bypasses would have had a damaging effect on a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), almost all within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Ancient woodland and the habitats of species of European importance, including dormice and the great crested newt, would also have been affected.

SSSI areas at risk included the Pevensey Levels – one of the largest wetland SSSIs in the south of England, Brookland Wood, Combwell Wood, Scotney Castle, High Woods and Combe Haven.

The road scheme would also have had a detrimental effect on Sussex Wildlife Trust reserves Filsham Reedbed and Marline Valley Woods, both Local Nature Reserves, and Tudeley Woods, a reserve managed by the RSPB and a proposed SSSI.

English Nature Chair, Martin Doughty, said, "We are delighted with Mr Spellar's

announcement. Whilst recognising the importance of transport investment, he has given weight to our advice and concluded the arguments presented in favour of the bypasses were not sufficient to outweigh the very strong environment requirements.

"The Government and the new Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) have clearly shown they are prepared to implement the environmental commitment they have made. This decision will safeguard the future of some very special and internationally important wildlife sites around Hastings."

Continuing in its bid to harmonise transport and wildlife, English Nature has also just unveiled its vision for transport plans in the South West.

As part of its contribution to the South West Area Multi-Modal Study (SWARMMS), English Nature has produced a booklet, *Transport and Wildlife*.

English Nature's Team Manager for Somerset, Andy King, said, "Our new booklet sets out English Nature's national policies on transport and puts them into context with the SWARMMS. It highlights some of the sensitive issues we are already involved in, such as the A30 in Cornwall, the A30/A303 through the Blackdowns and A303 alongside Stonehenge. We aim to be as proactive

as possible. Only when biodiversity criteria are applied evenly and consistently to individual schemes can we be confident that all possible environmental benefits will be delivered."

Areas under scrutiny include The Blackdown Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and an Environmentally Sensitive Area, which could be under threat with proposals to join the A30 and A303 in Devon and Somerset. In the surrounding countryside, hedges and associated wildlife, including dormice, are likely to be affected. The flow of natural springs could be halted and reduced, changing the diversity of the rare flowers found on SSSIs in the area.

English Nature's Chief Executive, David Arnold-Forster, added, "We want to contribute to the imaginative solution of transport problems. Solutions which ensure proper appraisal of new proposals, avoid damage to special areas and integrate conservation objectives through the improvement of existing environmentally sensitive networks."

The position statement is available from the Enquiry Service on 01733 455100 or can be viewed on-line at www.english-nature.org.uk.

Copies of the Transport and Wildlife leaflet are available free of charge from English Nature's Somerset Team on 01823 283211.

Paul Glendell, English Nature



Dragonflies

the 'dinosaurs' of the insect world

Dragonflies and damselflies are among the most ancient living species on the planet, having been in existence for almost 300 million years, yet, while the populations of some species are booming, others are very vulnerable due to the increasing pressure on their wetland habitats. By working with other partners, English Nature is seeking to conserve these habitats and safeguard the future of one of Britain's best-loved creatures.



Banded demoiselle damselfly

Robert Thompson



Chris Packham and Britain's first dragonfly conservation officer, Charlotte Murray, have a close encounter with a broad-bodied chaser dragonfly

Ian Stratton, British Dragonfly Society

Certainly one of the most high profile projects has been the appointment by the British Dragonfly Society (BDS) of its first Conservation Officer – the UK's first full-time professional dedicated to dragonfly conservation. Funded by English Nature, the Environment Agency, Esmée Fairburn Foundation, RSPB and British Waterways, the appointment of 24-year-old Charlotte 'Charlie' Murray was officially announced at an event on 9 July at the Dragonfly Sanctuary in Lee Valley Regional Park, Essex. Among those present were TV naturalist Chris Packham and guests of BDS including English Nature's Species Co-ordinator, Dave Stone, and former Wetland Entomologist, Martin Drake.

As a Conservation Officer, Charlie, who has a first class degree in zoology, will encourage and promote research into dragonflies and their habitats nationwide, by developing a list of research projects, and producing fact files about all the British species in the

hope of collating them into a handbook. She will also aim to raise the profile of BDS and increase awareness of dragonflies through presentations at shows, conferences and to interested groups. "In order to protect and conserve our dragonflies we need to know more about their biology and habitat

requirements so that we can manage existing habitat better and create new environments for them," explained Charlie, who is based in Reading. "It would be tragic if, after dragonflies have survived such an unimaginable number of years, we should witness further decline and loss of these fascinating and beautiful insects."



Emperor – the largest British dragonfly

WJ Furse ARPS

There are currently 38 species of dragonflies breeding in Britain, of which seven are vulnerable because of their specialised habitats – three species have already become extinct during the past 40 years. However, it is not all bad news as three new species of dragonfly have taken up residence in Britain in the last few years and several species, which were previously scarce, have expanded in number considerably. Dragonflies inhabit freshwater and wetland such as ponds, lakes, rivers, marshes, fens and bogs.

Charlie's work will feed directly into English Nature's Species Recovery Programme, which seeks to increase the population of over 350 threatened

wildlife species. Co-ordinator Dave Stone said, "This will aid the Programme by providing valuable on-the-ground work for dragonflies and will supplement projects already in place." The endangered southern damselfly, for example, is currently a priority of both the European Habitats Directive and the Species Recovery Programme. English Nature and the Environment Agency are funding a PhD, which will look into the life cycle and requirements of the southern damselfly and improve its habitat in the Dorset area.

"The work done by Charlie will also contribute to the Programme by addressing some of the broader issues in relation to wetland management – important habitats for many species within the Programme," Dave continues. "Dragonflies are very sensitive to changes and pollution of their environment, which makes them a good flagship species to indicate the quality of wetland habitat."

This is particularly relevant bearing in mind the Water Framework Directive, a new piece of legislation due to come into effect in three years time, which aims to safeguard the environmental water quality of river basins in the UK.

For further information on this and other work of the British Dragonfly Society visit www.dragonflysoc.org.uk

Vulnerable dragonflies and damselflies:

Norfolk hawk

Norfolk and Suffolk

scarce chaser

Southern and Eastern England

white-faced darter

Cheshire, Cumbria and Shropshire

southern damselfly

Hampshire and Dorset

scarce blue-tailed damselfly

Southern England

scarce emerald damselfly

Kent, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk

brilliant emerald

Southeast England



Dragonfly facts:

- they can fly at speeds of up to 25-30mph
- most of their life, from one to five years, is spent as a water-dwelling nymph or larva
- only two weeks to two months is spent as a free-flying adult
- they can eat 20% of their bodyweight a day
- adults feed on other flying insects, even smaller dragonflies, and larvae live on water creatures, including small fish
- a prehistoric dragonfly – *Meganeura* – had a wingspan of 70cms

Ian Stratton, British Dragonfly Society

"In order to protect and conserve our dragonflies we need to know more about their biology and habitat requirements so that we can manage existing habitat better and create new environments for them"

Pictured at the Lee Valley Park Dragonfly Sanctuary (l to r): Bill Wain, Secretary for the British Dragonfly Society; Chris Packham; Kim Thirlby, Environment Agency; Charlotte Murray; Martin Drake, English Nature; Jason Mitchell, RSPB; Dave Stone, English Nature.

Ian Stratton, British Dragonfly Society



Making farming and wildlife natural partners

Environmentally sustainable farming has a crucial role in restoring the biodiversity of the wider countryside, something recognised by English Nature in a growing alliance with the National Farmers' Union (NFU).

At a joint launch at the NFU headquarters in London earlier this month English Nature renewed its sponsorship of the NFU Biodiversity Award for a further three years, and together with the NFU, launched a 'Five Point Plan' for wildlife-friendly farming. This joint approach is part of a long-term strategy to change the perception that farming and conservation are opposed, when in fact a few simple actions can make a world of difference.

The Five Point Plan gives farmers cost-effective and sound advice on what action they can take to protect and improve wildlife on their land. The Biodiversity Award – part of the NFU President's Awards – celebrates, with a cash-for-conservation prize, significant conservation successes by farmers. English Nature has supported the Award for the past three years.

English Nature Agriculture Policy Officer Karen Mitchell said, "We launched the plan at the same time as re-committing ourselves to the award because we wanted as many farmers as possible to know about both initiatives, and we felt it was ideal to bring them together."

NFU Chief Rural Development and Countryside Advisor Andrew Clarke added, "The NFU is very pleased English Nature has chosen to sponsor the award once again, as it is a good way of demonstrating how farmers can deliver biodiversity alongside commercial production. The Five Point Plan is an extension of these ideas by providing practical advice for all farmers on managing their land for wildlife."

The Biodiversity Award – the story so far

The aim of the Biodiversity Award is not just to reward farmers for good conservation practices and to promote the contributions they can make to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), but also to provide funding for future preservation projects.

The winner is awarded up to £6,000 and the runner-up is given £4,000. Regional winners receive a cash prize of £200 and a certificate, and regional runners-up receive a cash prize of £100 and a certificate. Past winners and runners-up include:

George Danby, of Brickyard Farm, Lincolnshire, winner of the first NFU President's Award in 1999. He received cash from English Nature to extend a lake on his land by half an acre, widen a dyke and restore a pond near the lake. He said, "It was well worth applying for the award, we have attracted much more wildlife, including wading birds, dragonflies and water voles, since making the changes. I think the Five Point Plan is a very good idea because the majority of farmers don't know how to go about conservation and need to be educated."

Henry Edmund, of The Cholderton Estate, Wiltshire, runner-up of the Biodiversity Award in 1999. His proposed project was to create bumblebee-friendly pastures as part of his plans to convert to organic farming. He said, "The project has proved to be very successful. We now have 16 types of bumblebee in and around the area, which help to



Winners – John (left) and George Danby.

produce more plants. The knock-on effect is that the plants have attracted more insects and thus provided more food for birds. The project will continue to be monitored by the Natural History Museum over the next few years. I would encourage all farmers to get involved in conservation because in the future, it will prove to be one of the only ways farmers will receive support for their farms. The public want to see beautiful countryside and at the moment, they are not always getting it."

David Wood of Whinney Hill, Northumberland, winner of the 2000 award, who was selected for his record of outstanding conservation achievement. He has been working to preserve wildlife for decades by replanting ancient woodland, planting new trees and building ponds. He won £6,000 to carry out a three-year survey on establishing farm-friendly habitats for lapwings. He said: "I would encourage everyone to apply for the award. You get such a fantastic feeling when they call your name out to say you have won."

Those seeking application forms for the Biodiversity Award which is presented in February, should contact the NFU headquarters on 0207 331 7430 or your regional NFU office.

The Five Point Plan – in summary

1 Take stock of natural assets on your farms

Identify the type of wildlife and habitats you have on your farm, including birds, wildlife meadows, ponds, veteran trees and boggy areas.

2 Look after your natural assets

Once you have identified the wildlife around you, look at how best it can be managed. Tips include avoiding hedge trimming in the bird-nesting season, leaving berries and fruit for wild birds and mammals in hedgerows, and saving money by cutting hedges in rotation, ideally every two to three years.

3 Manage your inputs and farm waste carefully

Minimise pollution from pesticides, fertilisers and slurry, for example, by integrating codes of good agricultural practice for soil, water, air, and upland management into farm practices.

4 Consider new opportunities for wildlife

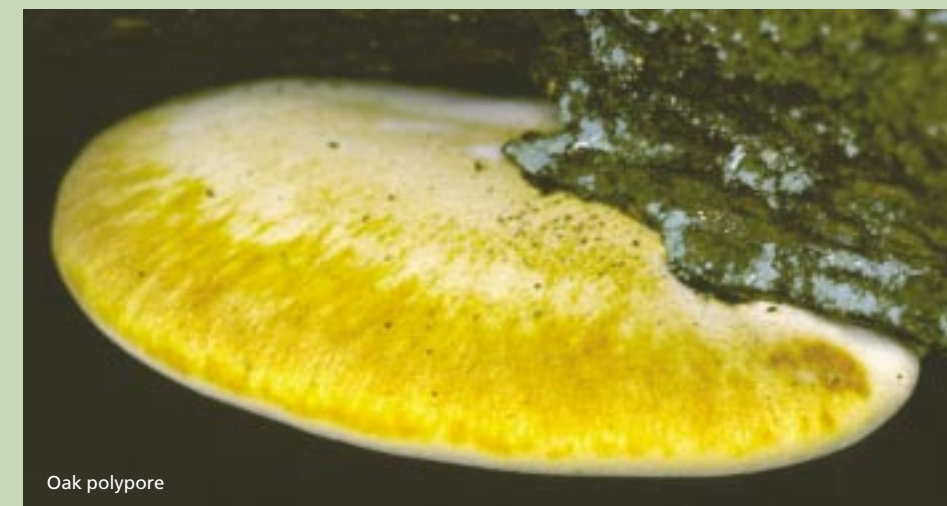
Think about what you can do to help the wildlife on your farm flourish. Examples include restoring, planting or re-planting hedgerows and trees, building ponds or incorporating wildlife areas into farm reservoirs.

5 Join a scheme under the England Rural Development Programme

Finally, there are several schemes which farmers can join to help them conserve wildlife on their land. For instance, farmers interested in planting or managing farm woodland could join the Woodland Grant Scheme and Farm Woodland Premium Scheme.

The Five Point Plan is available from Two Ten Communications on 0870 1214 177 or on-line at www.english-nature.org.uk.

Hunt for rare mushrooms



Oak polypore

Although wild mushrooms are not often viewed as the most attractive of wildlife features, they remain vital for maintaining the diversity of wildlife in our towns and countryside. That's why English Nature is lending its weight to a Biodiversity Action Plan, which aims to preserve 40 species across the country.

Part of this work includes a three-year study, which was launched a year ago this month. Together with Cardiff University, English Nature has been working to protect the future of a rare species of hedgehog fungus, called *Hericium erinaceum* and two other closely-related species, *H. coralloides* and *H. cirrhatum*. Another type of mushroom called the oak polypore is also included in the study. Naturalists and walkers are all being urged to be on the lookout for all four species.

English Nature's contact point for the Biodiversity Action Plan for fungi, Carl Borges, said, "Fungi are absolutely vital for every part of nature. If we are going to maintain the full diversity of the rest of our wildlife we must also conserve the fungi. They are natural decomposers, which re-cycle dead, organic material for other organisms to feed on. Their ability to decompose wood is fundamental in extending the life of old trees, allowing the trees to continue supporting a host of wildlife. Unfortunately, not much is known about these fungi as research into the species has mainly been for medical purposes. We need to find out what makes them tick in order to safeguard their future."

How to spot them...



Hericium erinaceum

Hericium spp.

There are three types of this fungus in the UK – *H. coralloides*, *H. erinaceum* and *H. cirrhatum*. They are a white/ivory colour and can be found on broad-leaved trees, fallen trees and logs and do not have an obvious stalk. The body of *Hericium erinaceum* is a solid knot of tissue, which can be up to 4 cm long. In contrast, the *H. coralloides* and *H. cirrhatum* have a branched form and spines, which range in length from 0.5 cm to 1.5 cms.

Oak polypore

In keeping with its name, polypore is always found on oak trees and can live on standing trees from just above ground level to a height of 12 metres, or on fallen trees or branches. Its body can be as long as 19cms. It starts off life a white/cream colour and darkens with age. The mushrooms can lie singly, in layers or in clusters.

Anyone who comes across either species should contact Carl Borges on 01206 796666. The mushrooms must not be touched as they are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Your garden, their habitat

English Nature's presence at this year's BBC Gardeners' World Live Show 2001 in Birmingham was an award-winning success. More important, however, was the significant contribution to the goal of winning hearts and minds round to the pleasures – and importance – of wildlife gardening.

English Nature was awarded a commendation by gardening expert Alan Titchmarsh in the category of "best contribution to environmental issues", after advising thousands of visitors about wildlife-friendly gardening.

English Nature Community Wildlife Officer Charron Pugsley-Hill said, "We are absolutely delighted, especially as it was our first experience at the event. We helped a variety of visitors, from would-be gardeners who needed advice on the basics of bringing wildlife into their gardens, to keen gardeners who wanted to extend their knowledge. We are planning to take part in the event again next year and we are

thinking of producing a real-life garden, which will reflect the kinds of things gardeners can introduce to help wildlife while at the same time helping them to enjoy their gardens."

This is by no means the only work that English Nature has



The certificate of commendation awarded to English Nature

done to make gardens an extension of our wilder green spaces. A booklet entitled *Wildlife-friendly gardening – a general guide* has been produced and a CD database of garden plants and animals is due to be released later this month.

English Nature has also helped fund the Gardening for Wildlife project, a joint initiative in Northumbria between Cramlington Organisation for Nature and the Environment (CONE) and the House Builders Confederation. The aim is to distribute a copy of the wildlife booklet to new house purchasers in the region, promote the benefits of wildlife-friendly gardening through show home gardens, and adopt wildlife-friendly principles throughout the whole site development process.



Charron added, "Most people in Britain have a garden and they can all do something, no matter how small, to encourage wildlife in their gardens. It's an important concept because we need to be more careful in our gardens and think about what we can do to protect wildlife in the future. For example, I would urge people to stop buying limestone for rockeries as it is destroying a valuable habitat. Also, it would help if people used peat-free compost or made their own out of household rubbish. If we all do a little bit, it will all add up to a lot."

English Nature's Wildlife-friendly gardening booklet is available from the Enquiry Service on 01753 455100.

For further information about the wildlife database, contact Steve Berry on 01273 476595. For details on the Gardening for Wildlife Project, contact CONE on 01670 542386/542384.

A little effort brings great rewards.

Do's and Don'ts Guide To Creating A Wildlife-Friendly Garden

Do's

- ✓ make a diagram of existing features in your garden and consider how they could be enhanced to benefit wildlife. Involve your children – their enthusiasm and imagination will prove invaluable.
- ✓ try not to use herbicides, slug pellets and pesticide sprays. You will find natural predators will do much of the work for you – for free.
- ✓ build a garden pond – they help to conserve frogs and many other water creatures when their natural habitats disappear or become polluted.
- ✓ if you haven't the room for a pond, try sinking an old enamel or china bath or kitchen sink into a corner of your garden. Remember to add a few stones at one end to provide steps for frogs and toads.
- ✓ create a glade in your garden by planting shrubs at the edge of your garden. These sheltered areas are favoured by blackbirds, robins, hedgehogs and bats.
- ✓ where would a wild garden be without a bird table? But make sure it's out of reach of cats! The greater variety of food you offer, the more species you will see.
- ✓ protect our peat bogs, which are rapidly being destroyed for peat compost, by producing your own compost with household waste.
- ✓ encourage mini-beasts by planting plenty of open structured nectar flowers and keep a compost heap.
- ✓ if you haven't much space, why not introduce a window box or a hanging basket.

Don'ts

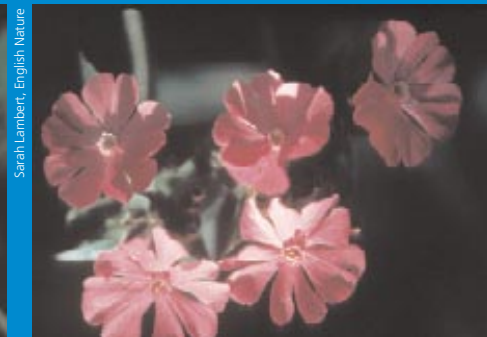
- ✗ if you have a new garden, don't rush into blanketing the surface with topsoil, many wild flowers prefer the less fertile subsoil.
- ✗ don't dig up wild plants for your garden. They rarely survive, it's illegal and it robs the countryside of its plantlife. Packets of wild flower seed-mixes are widely available.
- ✗ don't cut all the lawn so often. Why not let clematis go to seed instead of cutting it after flowering or allow ivy to spread further along the wall.
- ✗ don't buy gardening produce which has caused and still causes harm to wildlife habitats across the planet. These include tropical hardwoods for furniture, south east Asian charcoal for barbecues, peat from bogs and stone from limestone pavements.



Garden ponds help conserve frogs, dragonflies and many other water creatures.



Go "wild" in the garden



No garden should be without yellow flag or red campion



Paul Clendell, English Nature

Nuts about the dormouse

The nation's second Great Nut Hunt has just been launched, so expect to see concerned conservationists descending on our woodlands and hedgerows to help ensure the survival and prosperity of a very special native – the dormouse.

Spare a thought for the dormouse. Once appropriately referred to as the "sleeper", it has been an easy target down the years for humans and was sometimes kept as a pet. More recently it has become better associated with literary classic 'Alice in Wonderland' and the butt of the Mad Hatter's frustrations. So it's clear the dormouse has a place in our cultural history.

The reality though is that over the last 100 years its numbers have dramatically fallen. In fact, it has become extinct across half its original range in England during this time and is now one of those listed on the English Nature Species Recovery Programme. The reason? The continuing loss of ancient woodland, the splitting of big woods into smaller ones, and unsympathetic woodland management.

To ensure the future of the dormouse, English Nature needs to find out exactly where it still survives and identify woodland areas where it could be brought back.

Which is where the Great Nut Hunt comes in.



Kick-started earlier this month by wildlife expert Bill Oddie and supported by Mammals Trust UK, the Countryside Council for Wales and CenterParcs, the 'hunt' is encouraging the public to look for, and then send in, hazel nuts that bear the dormouse's distinctive teeth marks. This way, English Nature will be able to build up a picture of the range and size of dormouse populations in England and Wales. Not only will this picture allow conservation work and resources to be better targeted in the future, but will also show how the dormouse has progressed since the last such survey in 1993. Then, nearly a quarter of a million nuts were found, 1,352 of which were identified as having been opened by dormice. 334 sites for dormice were also found in England and Wales.



Anyone wanting to get involved should send for a special survey pack by writing to Great Nut Hunt, PO Box 26169, London, SW8 4AF or log-on to www.greatnuthunt.org.uk. Local conservation groups may also be organising events in your area.

All entries are to be in by January 2002 and the survey results will be published on the website in March 2002.

Dormouse facts:

Dormice are a bright, golden colour and have a thick, furry tail and big, black eyes. They are quite small, usually only around two to three inches long with a tail around the same size. Adults weigh around the same as two £1 coins.

Habitat Most dormice live in deciduous woodland and thick hedgerow. They are mainly found in the south of England, from Cornwall to Kent and in Herefordshire and Northamptonshire. There have been sightings in the Lake District, Northumberland and Wales.

Food They feed on flowers, pollen, fruit, insects and nuts (hence the search for hazelnuts).

What to look for Dormice open hazel nuts by biting a neat, round hole on one side and then leave characteristic teeth marks around the hole.

