



A 'Broad' management programme Maintaining a wetland National Nature Reserve

Stamp of approval

English Nature earns Charter
Mark for the third time in a row

Action for wildlife

Managing Dartmoor's 'lifescape'

A world class coast

Global recognition for
Dorset and East Devon coast

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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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:
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Awarded for excellence

Cover picture



Cover photograph: Rick Southwood/English Nature

An adult swallowtail feeds on a meadow thistle in their Norfolk Broad habitat – see the 'A 'Broad' management programme' article starting on page 8

brief update

Species Recovery Programme celebrates a decade

Over 200 delegates joined English Nature to celebrate ten years of its Species Recovery Programme (SRP) at a three-day conference held at the Hayes Conference Centre in Derbyshire from 5-7 December.

They represented many of the conservation partners English Nature has worked with to rescue species such as starfruit, lady's slipper orchid, ladybird spider, red kite and dormouse.

The event was opened by English Nature's Chairman Martin Doughty, who said, "We are absolutely delighted to be welcoming these wildlife successes with our friends and partners. Together we have made a great contribution to looking after and

improving England's wealth of wildlife."

The first speaker was Tony Whitten, Senior Biodiversity Specialist SE Asia for the World Bank and author of the original report that proposed species recovery and provided the foundation for the SRP.

"Global biodiversity is being lost at unprecedented rates," said Tony. "However, the successes of the SRP shows that you can begin to reverse the trend through public interest and involvement, good scientific knowledge and supportive national policies."

Professor Chris Baines, a freelance writer and broadcaster, who specialises in biodiversity, encouraged delegates to think in broader terms, saying,

"For the first time we are making connections between biodiversity, the way we farm, tourism and recreation. We must have joined-up thinking. Our knowledge of species and habitats has a role in rebuilding the landscape." Chris suggested integrating habitat creation projects, such as new wetland areas, into socio-economic issues, including the serious problem of water management.

A constant issue running through the conference was the need to raise public awareness. Alex Kirby, BBC Environment Correspondent, encouraged all the organisations working with the SRP to use the media to outline their work to a wider audience.

£500,000 for NNR restoration



English Nature plans to use £500,000 of its Government Capital Modernisation Fund for a major programme of habitat restoration at Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Cambridgeshire.

Drainage of Whittlesey Mere in the 1850s, and of the surrounding farmland since then, has led to the drying out of both reserves and the long-term encroachment of scrub, resulting in a decline in the wildlife.

Now, large-scale scrub removal and improvements to the dyke system will restore Woodwalton Fen to favourable condition. At Holme Fen, the hydrology of the site will be improved to create suitable conditions

for the development of raised mire - the most south-easterly example in the UK. Scrub removal will also help to restore areas of acid grassland and heath.

Manager of the NNRs, Alan Bowley, said, "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to create conditions at Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen which will support a thriving wildlife community for future generations to enjoy."

"The challenges are immense but we are building on experience gained on other NNRs, and are developing innovative methods to clear the scrub. Long-term management will be assured by extensive grazing, development of our own Fen Harvester

Habitat restoration will take place at Woodwalton Fen (left) and Holme Fen NNRs.

and the sustainable development of commercial reed and sedge cutting."

In addition, the modernisation programme will provide new hides, boardwalks, signs and interpretation boards for the two NNRs. Team Manager of the Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire Northamptonshire Team, Tom Tew, said, "This exciting project will both enable us to increase public access to these two remarkable fenland sites, and also ensure the survival of many rare habitats and species found on the reserves."

Gwilym Wren, Deputy Team Manager with the Somerset Team.

"These skills were developed and improved over generations, and we cannot afford to let this knowledge fade into

history without trying to capture it."

Whilst modern methods using flail trimmers are more efficient, they cannot replace the old skills and the result is that hedges are gradually declining,

becoming thin and full of gaps, which is no good for wildlife that depend on them for food and shelter.

Anyone able to help should contact the Somerset Team on 01823 283211 to request a survey form.

NEWS IN SHORT

Major Inquiry opened

English Nature made its opening statement against a proposed port development at Dibden Bay, Southampton, when a Public Inquiry opened on November 27 last year.

English Nature believes that Associated British Port's expansion proposals for the Bay will detrimentally affect internationally important wildlife sites including eight Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Birds such as brent geese, oystercatcher, ringed and grey plover, dunlin, curlew and redshank will be at risk, as will lapwing, wigeon and teal.

English Nature made its opening statement against the proposed port development on November 28 at the Applemore Recreation Centre, Claypits Lane, Dibden, Hythe, Hampshire. The Inquiry is due to continue at the Ferry Terminal, European Way, Eastern Docks, Southampton for at least a year.

Protecting our 'Blue Planet'

English Nature give its full support to The Marine Wildlife and Conservation Bill, a Private Members' Bill that was put forward by John Randall MP in October.

The Bill aims to ensure protection and management of the marine environment to bring it in line with land-based wildlife protection. Chair of English Nature Sir Martin Doughty said, "The marine environment is at present being degraded and poorly managed. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is now in effect and the imbalance between marine and land-based wildlife protection is even greater than before."

"The Bill is very timely, the BBC's exceptional programme 'The Blue Planet' has kindled a huge interest from the public in the oceans and their special wildlife. We need to ensure we look after our own marine heritage – at least 50 per cent of all the biodiversity found in the UK is on our coast and in our seas."

Old ways to build new hedgerows

English Nature is working with the Mammal Trust UK and Center Parcs to record traditional methods of

managing hedgerows.

We are hoping to tap into the wealth of experience of

pre-World War Two farmers to preserve details of sensitive hedgerow management.

The search is now on to find people who worked particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, and used traditional skills to keep animals in or out of fields.

"The rush of modern life so often leaves traditional practices behind, and yet they were used for many years simply because they were the best way of doing a particular job," said

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Now is the time for... hares

In the second in a series in which English Nature experts share their knowledge of wildlife over the seasons, Dr Tony Mitchell-Jones, Senior Vertebrate Ecologist based at Peterborough, gives us the origins of the simile, “Mad as a March hare”.

“It’s not widely appreciated, but researchers are now generally agreed that the brown hare *Lepus europaeus* is an old introduction to Britain, probably first brought here by the Romans. Originally an animal of the open steppes, the hare has found the open arable landscapes of eastern England most to its liking, though it can be found almost anywhere except parts of the uplands.

“Hares are well adapted to life in the open. During the day they lie-up in shallow depressions in fields, field margins or, particularly in winter, woods, and emerge at dusk to feed on grasses, herbs and arable crops. They are most easily seen during the winter, when fields are bare or crops are short, and sometimes, dozens can be seen at the same time.

“The mad March behaviour of hares is legendary and, like many high profile animal behaviours, this originates from the breeding season. Usually starting in late January, males become increasingly interested in females as they come into breeding condition and will follow them closely. If the female is unreceptive she will turn and box with the male to let him know that his



Brown hare.

attentions are unwelcome. Sometimes several males can be seen chasing a single female, and males also fight amongst themselves.

“The hare has always been a favourite game animal, both for shooting and hunting with dogs (coursing and beagling). Although the hare is still a common animal in many parts of England, analysis of the records kept by sporting estates has shown a long-term decline in numbers since the 1960s. The explanation for this probably lies in changes to agriculture that have taken place during that time, with larger fields, simpler cropping patterns and a much greater emphasis on spring-sown cereals. All these have conspired to reduce the amount of food available to hares at certain times of the year. Conservation activities, such as leaving uncultivated headlands and field margins, can help hares by providing food at times when it is not available within the crops.”

The importance of green spaces



Swanholme Lakes Local Nature Reserve: an important urban green space for Lincoln.

English Nature broadly supports recommendations made by the Government’s Urban Green Spaces Task Force in a report published in November last year.

But, English Nature Chief Executive, David Arnold-Forster, says the paper failed to recognise that urban green spaces are also important in the ecological functioning of towns and cities.

Recommendations included in the report highlighted the need to:

- Obtain a more accurate picture of the quality of urban parks and green spaces,
- Support local people’s involvement in the management of green spaces,
- Reverse the loss of skills from local authorities and,
- Establish benchmarks for parks management and green space provision.

Mr Arnold-Forster said urban green spaces were important for:

- Reducing the impacts of pollution,
- Limiting extreme temperatures,
- Reducing the impact of ultra-violet rays and,

- Controlling storm-water flooding.

Mr Arnold-Forster said, “Parks and green spaces are also vital for supporting a rich and vibrant biodiversity – whether it’s the sound of bird song or colourful wild flowers – it helps make towns and cities less stressful places to live.

“In addition, many threatened species live in urban green spaces, including song thrush and the stag beetle, and the appropriate management of habitats in these places is vital to ensure their continued survival.”

He added, “The Task Force’s work has been invaluable and long overdue. We are pleased that the Government recognises the value of urban green spaces to people, and that much of this is down to the desire to have easy contact with the natural world.

“We want to ensure that no-one need travel further than 300 metres to reach a natural space to experience its benefits. We look forward to contributing our experience in the management of natural sites and promoting the role of biodiversity in towns and cities to the Task Force.”

Bringing bogs to the public



Steve Hewitt/Tullie House

Peat bogs are one of England’s most fragile habitats and English Nature is helping the public find out more about them by sponsoring an innovative exhibition in Carlisle.

A permanent exhibition has been installed in the wildlife gallery of the Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, which attracts over 190,000 visitors each year, and is close to the South Solway Mosses National Nature Reserve.

The National Nature Reserve is an important national asset, boasting the largest area of intact bog surface in England, comprising Bowness Common, Glasson Moss and Wedholme Flow (near Kirkbride).

“This is a milestone for us,” said Frank Mawby, English Nature’s Site Manager based in Kirkbride.

“This is the first time English Nature has sponsored a permanent display in Tullie House.”

The display was opened on 27 September 2001 by English Nature Council Member and former Acting Chairman, Professor David Norman, and includes a diorama of sphagnum bog and bog pool showing many examples of the special plants and animals that live there.

Visitors will also be able to find out more through an interactive multimedia programme, which has been specially written by Steve

A peat bog diorama showing a sphagnum pool and hummocks with various peat bog species.

Hewitt, Keeper of Natural Science at Tullie House.

“The peat bogs around the Solway Firth and the south Cumbria coast include some of the most important remaining examples of this rare and fragile habitat,” said Steve Hewitt.

“We are delighted that funding support from English Nature has enabled us to create a new permanent exhibit to tell people about peat bogs and the need to conserve them.”

A multi-media display from the exhibition.



Steve Hewitt/Tullie House

NEWS IN SHORT

To cap it all

Serious damage to moorland at a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Axe Edge, near Buxton, was avoided when English Nature worked alongside the Coal Authority to cap a 200ft coal mine shaft.

A helicopter was used to transport 40 tonnes of stone to cap the collapsed shaft in order to avoid damaging the fragile moorland.

After the shaft had been filled, peat and vegetation were replaced on top of the site, which covers 400 square metres of moorland.

The site is also a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) because of its blanket bog and heath vegetation. It’s also a Special Protection Area (SPA) for certain moorland birds, including curlew, golden plover, merlin and short-eared owl.

English Nature Conservation Officer for the South West Peak, Sara Barrett, said, “This is a very special area for nature conservation, and we were delighted to work with the Coal Authority’s contractors, IMC Mining Consultants, to make the shafts safe.”

Open to all

English Nature’s Council invited members of the public to find out more about the Peterborough-based organisation at an open meeting on December 4.

Items discussed included science, geology, updated agricultural strategies, hen harriers, and staff pay and performance.

“This is all part of our continued efforts to make English Nature’s work accessible, transparent and understandable to everyone,” said David Arnold-Foster, English Nature Chief Executive.

He added, “It is important that people understand the issues that face nature conservation today, and so appreciate the background to the decisions and policies that English Nature makes.”

brief update

WHEN NATURE CALLS

English Nature's Enquiry Service is the equivalent to the Emergency Services for the people it helps, and now deals with about 1,800 enquiries and requests every month.

Launching the first in a new regular feature looking at the most sought after information and the most unusual enquiries from members of the public, Enquiry Service Manager Dick Seamons gives us an insight into one of English Nature's most valuable assets.

"Most requests depend, not surprisingly, on the season; we are asked about frogspawn in early Spring, snakes in high Summer and the dreaded herring gull in the nesting season. Sometimes I think our enquirers would like us to rush over and deal with every problem personally. We can't, of course, but do try to give as much good, balanced help and advice as possible.

"In general, most of our enquirers are pleasant seekers of knowledge, but some queries are downright odd. My favourite strange request was for a dozen broomsticks for a charity event. This was long before the Harry Potter phenomenon (we found her a source, by the way).

"And we never know what the next call may bring – such as the lady who phoned to tell us there was a coyote on her garage roof and wasn't going to be fobbed off with mentions of foxes or domestic pets!"

Gripping stuff

English Nature staff, working with gamekeepers on the Earl of Derby's Leek Moors estate, are really getting to grips with moorland conservation.

In an ambitious programme in the northern part of the Leek Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), near Cut Thorn Hill and around Danebower Hollow, south west of Buxton, workers have been blocking the extensive system of drainage channels, or 'grips', which were dug over large areas of the estate up to 40 years ago.

"At the time," explained Sara Barrett, Conservation Officer for the South West Peak, "it was thought that extensive drainage of the

moors would benefit both grouse and livestock. However, it has since been shown that not only did moor-gripping do little to benefit moorland vegetation, it actually disturbed the natural drainage systems and damaged bog vegetation. This in turn caused erosion, through the over-deepening of grips and gulleys, and increased silt deposits in rivers downstream."

Now English Nature and the Earl of Derby's estate are systematically blocking the network of grips, which had been originally dug in the 1960s with the best of intentions. The grips spread across about 250 acres (100ha) of moorland in a distinctive, herringbone

pattern. They are being blocked by using peat dams starting at the top of the small feeder grips, which are spaced so that water backs up to within two to four inches of the top of each channel.

Sara explained that areas were being targeted where there would be maximum wildlife benefit. "It is hoped that the work will increase the wetness of the peat and the amount of *Sphagnum* moss by creating suitable conditions for it to spread. The pools created by the dams will also provide vital breeding grounds for a range of insects – which in turn provide food for moorland ground-nesting birds such as curlew, golden plover and, of course, the red grouse."

Rare site saved

A rare Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Derbyshire has been saved by English Nature, with valuable assistance from BTCV, following a four-year restoration project.

One major bonus of the project, at Hulland Moss, near Ashbourne, has been the welcome return of heather to lowland Derbyshire for the first time in many years.

With 2.7 hectares (6.7 acres) of lowland bog and heath, the site is one of few remaining lowland bogs in Derbyshire and

was designated an SSSI 20 years ago.

When the site was officially notified in 1981, heather was no longer present because of neglect. Trees were spreading onto the site and its future looked uncertain.

To the delight of English Nature, the heather regenerated naturally from the native seed bank held in the soil. Other plants which have benefited from the project include *Sphagnum* moss, bog asphodel, marsh violet, marsh valerian and marsh pennywort.

The site also has some wet woodland, including alder, grey willow, oak and birch – which provides shelter to the narrow buckler ferns. The small boggy pools are home to a number of beetles and bugs.

English Nature's Conservation Officer for Derbyshire outside the Peak District, Roger Catchpole, said, "We are thrilled and delighted at what has been achieved at Hulland Moss and hope that it will pave the way for other lowland heath restoration projects."

Stamp of approval

Providing an excellent customer service is at the heart of English Nature. And that's official after the organisation was awarded the Government's prestigious Charter Mark for the third time in a row.

The Charter Mark award is open to all public sector organisations, which deal directly or indirectly with the public, and is awarded for three years, after which organisations have to re-apply. In order to achieve the award, an organisation must prove its dedication to the Charter Mark's ten criteria (see box below), and the stamp of approval proves the organisation's excellence in customer services.

English Nature Resources and Communications Director, Caroline Wood, said, "I am delighted we have achieved the Charter Mark for the third time. How we deliver our services is very important to our reputation and our credibility as an excellent Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB).

"However, we cannot now sit back and relax. We must continue to strive to deliver an excellent service, looking for improvements and work towards the fourth renewal of our Charter Mark in three years time."

The Charter Mark assessor particularly praised English Nature's website, Enquiry Service and information leaflets and booklets. Service First Facilitator Susan White, who co-ordinated the application, said, "English Nature is unique in that it works with such a broad range of people – including owners and occupiers of Sites of Special Scientific

Interest (SSSIs), volunteers and members of the public. So, I think we have done well to win the award once again.

"But we know there's room for improvement. We still have a lot of work to do, especially with SSSIs, and in the future we will be working towards making NNRs more accessible to the public by making further improvements to our website. We will also be continuing to hold open meetings and events to help people feel more a part of English Nature."

English Nature applied for the award in September 2001 and an assessor visited head office to speak to staff in October. It was confirmed English Nature had won the award in December and the awards ceremony is set to take place next month.

The ten criteria for Charter Mark :

- > Set standards
- > Be open and provide full information
- > Consult and involve
- > Encourage access and the promotion of choice
- > Treat all fairly
- > Put things right when they go wrong
- > Use resources effectively
- > Innovate and improve
- > Work with other providers
- > Provide user satisfaction



Awarded for excellence

A 'Broad' management programme

Being second only in popularity to the Lake District as a wetland area puts a very heavy burden on the management of the Norfolk Broads, particularly at this time of year. Of the four National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in the Broads, Bure Marshes alone counts some 80,000 to 100,000 annual visitors, many complete with boats. For English Nature Site Manager, Rick Southwood, ensuring adequate access for visitors, whilst protecting natural habitats in the marshes' 415 hectares, means a constant struggle to keep in check nature's regenerative ability.



Although they may conjure up images of far-reaching reedbeds, the Norfolk Broads do in fact cover a whole array of habitats. From wet woodland of alder and willow, to fen and open water, the area is home to a rich diversity of birds, invertebrates, mammals and plantlife, and Bure Marshes provides for many of them. Examples include the rare marsh harrier, swallowtail butterfly, marsh pea, plus otters and water voles. Needless to say, it's an area that requires a heavy investment in hands-on management, most of which falls during the winter months. During his 20 plus years as a site manager, Rick Southwood has learnt to employ an array of modern and traditional measures to maintain the fine balance between the marsh's competing influences.

"It's full-on at the moment and will continue to be so through until the end of March," says Rick, "but it can be a tricky business. The River Bure is tidal, and the marshes can flood during the winter months. Taking machinery, or even working on foot, on that kind of

Maintenance is critical if boats are to have access to the Broads



Before and after - (left) a mown dyke edge versus (right) an unmown edge.



softened surface can end up causing more harm than good."

One hundred years ago, with intensive cutting of the fen for reed, sedge and hay, there was little or no wet woodland on the site. Now the NNR has one of the largest blocks in the country, providing a home to great- and lesser-spotted woodpeckers, longtailed tits and other common birds. Wet woodland management is largely a matter of non-intervention, but the surrounding open fen requires persistent scrub management to stop the succession process that would ultimately allow the trees to spread. This is done through a combination of mowing, low-intensity grazing by Highland heifers, the use of chainsaws and brushcutters to control regrowth, and a self-propelled felling and chipping machine called 'Moose' to clear areas of scrub and young woodland which can revert to open fen.

Work on the open water areas is more intensive still. Dykes need to be 'edged' with brushcutters, and raked annually to slow down the process of 'skimming over'. Aquatic plants can be suffocated by algal growth caused by too many



Conserving such species as water soldier (top) and great-crested grebe is all part of the management programme.

Keeping the dyke edges mown is vital for aquatic plants to flourish.

the open water itself, it has the potential to restrict access to the area for workboats. For this reason, a floating mud pump is shortly to be towed to different points in the dyke system in preparation for the summer.

"We are also doing other work to improve public access to the site over the winter months," continues Rick. "A nature trail running across the NNR is going to need a certain amount of maintenance and we need to re-build the quay heading that allows boats to moor in the reserve. And then there are the signs and interpretation panels to be worked on.

"Bure Marshes are of international importance (Candidate Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, Ramsar Site), yet are undergoing a constant cycle of change, which means that there is always work to be done. If we don't do that, then those species that rely on the open water or fen will soon find their habitats disappearing."

Not what Rick has spent the last 20 years preventing.



Action for wildlife

Taking the view that the countryside is a series of 'lifescapes' is crucial if we're to balance the demands made on it by humans and wildlife. And this means creating new ways of working: greater collaboration between partners, more community involvement and better use of resources. Now 'Action for Wildlife – The Dartmoor Biodiversity Project' is firmly putting this approach into practice.

Based on a previous scheme within the River Dart catchment, the three year project is intended to "maintain and enhance the wildlife resource of Dartmoor", a granite moorland of 95,311 hectares, whilst also meeting Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets. This is being achieved through a five strong grouping of key partners each with involvement on the ground. These include English Nature, the Dartmoor National Park Authority, the Environment Agency and the Duchy of Cornwall.

"It's an excellent framework and promotes good communication," says Simon Bates, Conservation Officer with the English Nature Devon team. "We have steering group meetings every three months and discuss the work programmes, feed in work directly from our own organisations and decide where we want the project to go."

"The beauty of Action for Wildlife is that it is funded entirely by these five partners," adds Susan Bragg, Action for Wildlife Project Officer. "We don't have to submit statistics in order to



School children explored biodiversity in their local area

Dart Biodiversity Project



What is a 'lifescape'?

It is an unfortunate truth that protected sites alone are not going to save many species from population decline. Wildlife often depends on the wider countryside beyond such sites for feeding and breeding purposes and without it, areas rich in biodiversity would themselves suffer with the inexorable loss of wildlife. Therefore, the countryside outside of these areas needs to be far friendlier to wildlife and enable its freedom of movement.

It's something that many conservation organisations, including English Nature, have come to recognise. With this in mind, a new approach to management has been developed where the countryside is seen as a series of 'lifescapes'. The approach, however, goes far beyond wildlife conservation alone.

"The countryside has a whole raft of demands placed upon it, which have to be reconciled," says Keith Porter, English Nature Environmental Audit Manager. "We have to recognise their legitimacy in the countryside and work with them."

This means balancing the needs of wildlife with those of local communities and economic interests, such as tourism and agriculture.

"It requires a true collaboration between partner organisations where there is equal and even input by all, both at planning level and down on the ground. At the same time, it means building relationships with local interests such as farmers and communities, and getting them involved actively early on."

In addition to Action for Wildlife, four other 'lifescape' pilots are currently being run in the South Downs, Chilterns, Suffolk Coast and Heath, and the Forest of Bowland. Although they are not due to be completed until 2004, examples of best practice are already being filtered into other projects, both by English Nature and partner organisations.

Dart Biodiversity Project

Below - Dart Valley



Dartmoor National Park Authority

justify a European grant and work within that remit; we can do exactly what these five organisations want."

And the people on the steering group are the perfect level to enable that. They're high enough within their organisations to have influence and understanding of the wider picture, whilst having a clear idea of what's going on on the ground. "So it's not a talking shop and nor are there any 'sleeping partners'," continues Susan. "The other point is that if you hit a problem with a work programme, it is possible to resolve it much more quickly through the unique relationship now developed with the key organisations working on Dartmoor."

Having the Duchy of Cornwall – a major landowner – on the steering committee has made gaining access to sites much easier for the project officer who is funded jointly by the five bodies. But it is the importance of gaining the full support and input of farmers and local communities that really makes Action for Wildlife and other lifescape projects different.

"This project is not simply about providing advice to farmers and landowners. It is also about backing up that advice with additional support to ensure action is achieved on the ground," says Susan. "This can include financial support, providing labour or materials if needed and in particular, help with the liaison needed to undertake practical work on the ground. Every single work programme that we've undertaken has had to be in conjunction with the community. It's a ground-up approach of actually going on to a farm and looking to see what needs to be done – sometimes field by



Spotlight on invertebrates



field – but is also a top-down approach with the BAPs providing the targets and focus for the project.”

Talks, walks, training days and skill sharing days are all helping to create a sense of parish ownership of the project, although promoting such ownership can sometimes slow down the work. One case in point is of a fence that was to be erected to protect the habitat of a rare plant species, the Deptford pink. Rather than forging ahead with the work and risk upsetting locals who exercised their dogs in the area that the fence would cross, the project team wrote an article in the local newspaper and spread word in the community inviting feedback on the proposal. After consultation, the fence went up with little outcry or upset.

It is against this backdrop of partnership and consultation between organisations and local communities and interests that another of the fundamental elements of a ‘lifecycle’ can happen: linking habitats to give wildlife a degree of freedom of movement. “We’re now looking at existing data, recorded on a digitised system, to see where the project might act to link habitats,” concludes Simon. “By analysing the distribution of fragmented woodlands, for example, we can see which fields in between might be reverted to woodlands. Then we can start to approach landowners.”



Volunteers get close to nature (above) and trees are cleared to encourage other wildlife

Dart Biodiversity Project

“Lifescapes require a true collaboration between partner organisations where there is equal and even input by all, both at planning level and down on the ground.”

Keith Porter, English Nature Environmental Audit Manager

Think about wildlife conservation in Britain, and endangered species such as the red squirrel or otter may well come to mind. But the tiny creatures of the invertebrate world are a vital part of our ecology, and are as much at risk. One of the reasons for their relatively low profile is the lack of attractive photographs available for presentations. But all that has changed with the launch of two new educational slide packs produced jointly by English Nature and the Amateur Entomologists’ Society.

The new slide packs, 3 and 4, focus on invertebrate conservation in upland and farmland, and coastal and ‘brownfield’ sites and follow on from the first two packs, heathland and grassland, and woodland and wetland. The packs come with a booklet of comprehensive notes on each slide.

“The objective is to give good invertebrate examples to include in wider talks on conservation in particular habitats,” said Roger Key, Invertebrate Ecologist with English Nature’s Lowlands Team.

“Each picture is of an invertebrate that can be used to illustrate a number of aspects of the ecology and conservation of invertebrates in the specific habitat, and there are anecdotes about some of the species that can be used in illustrated talks. The

Heineken hoverfly, for instance, has a long proboscis which can reach the parts of flowers that other hoverflies cannot reach.”

The slides, 24 in each pack, have been provided by 10 photographers from English Nature and the Amateur Entomologists’ Society and include animals as diverse as the alpine weevil and snow flea, dune robber fly and the wolf spider.



Left and below: The snow flea is one of the few species to venture on to snow.



Roger Key/English Nature

“All species have been chosen to illustrate a number of different issues and many of the species can illustrate similar points in additional habitats - all the information is there to enable users to mix and match,” Roger said.

In Britain alone there are 30,000 species of insects and other invertebrates, making them the largest part of our species biodiversity. These slide packs have been produced to bring this bizarre and fascinating world better into the spotlight – and the first slide packs proved to be so successful that they sold out within a few months and had to be reprinted.

And if you want to know why the soldier beetle is nicknamed the ‘hogweed bonking beetle’ or which insect is the cuckoo of the wasp world, you’ll just have to get the slides packs for yourself.

Left: Woodlouse spider preying on pill woodlouse



Right: General purple and gold micro-moth

Below: Creeping-willow leaf beetle

Roger Key/English Nature



Roger Key/English Nature

DIDYOUKNOW... Cone-eyed flies lay their eggs on bumblebees in a spectacular aerial dogfight, the larva killing the bee by feeding on it internally.

The packs cost £37 for 3 and 4 together and £37 for packs 1 and 2 together, and are available to order from: The AES Slide Pack, PO Box 8774, London SW7 2ZG

A world class coast

In December, the Dorset and East Devon coastline was globally recognised as being as significant as the Great Barrier Reef and the Grand Canyon when UNESCO made it a World Heritage Site.



On a worldwide scale

- This stretch of coastline provides a near continuous record of earth history between 251 and 66 million years ago.
- Names from Dorset are used globally by geologists. The Kimmeridge Clay, classically exposed in Kimmeridge Bay, lends its name to the Kimmeridgian Stage while the Portlandian Stage derives its name from Portland.
- The site has nine fossil vertebrate localities of international importance. The marine reptiles represent the most diverse Lower Jurassic fauna known, with many first discoveries and specimens in museum collections throughout the world.
- The site is a spectacular laboratory of modern coastal process: landslips have been documented since the 19th century and the mudslides of Black Ven, near Charmouth, are the largest coastal mudslides in Europe.



From ① Exmouth in Devon to ② Studland in Dorset the geological importance of this 95 mile stretch of coast has long been recognised and, through English Nature, is protected by 13 geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

The coast's geology spans 185 million years, from the Triassic through the Jurassic and Cretaceous Periods, and it is for this geology that World Heritage status has been conferred.

The Dorset and East Devon coast has inspired poets, authors and artists for over three centuries most notably Thomas Hardy's 'Wessex' and Turner's watercolours of the south coast.



"The span of time is very important, seeing vast changes in the environment including extremes of climate and the coming and going of the dinosaurs," said Jonathan Larwood, English Nature geologist.

"The fossiliferous Dorset and East Devon coast has been popular with visitors and geologists since the 18th century. If you walk from west to east you are effectively walking through time from older rocks to younger ones. The fact that it is now a World Heritage Site shows that the geology of the area and its contribution to the science of geology, is of world importance."

The process of bidding for World Heritage Site status has taken around four years from conception – with the establishment by Dorset and Devon County Councils of a steering group to co-ordinate the bid – to confirmation. The group put their proposals forward to the Government; they were then presented to UNESCO who sent an assessor to judge the site last year. The report produced from that assessment formed the basis of UNESCO's decision.

"It is a long drawn out process and part of that has been due to the nature of the site itself, which is very narrow, and involves dealing with two county councils and numerous local bodies," Jonathan said.

"Having World Heritage Site status for the area adds value to the SSSIs designated by English Nature, and helps bring people together to look at how to manage the area as a whole. The Dorset and East Devon coast is already visited by thousands of people every year and part of the appeal has always been the geology, particularly collecting fossils, and what this will do is raise awareness and appreciation of that coastline."

- In the UK we have 20 World Heritage Sites including the City of Bath and Hadrian's Wall.
- The UK has four other natural World Heritage Sites, including the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland and St Kilda in the Hebrides.
- The Dorset and East Devon coastline will be the only natural World Heritage Site on the mainland of the UK.

WHAT'S ON? GUIDE

FROM NOW

FROM NOW

Exhibition on Peat Bogs

Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle. The exhibition includes a multimedia programme and displays of the South Solway Mosses National Nature Reserve, which has the largest area of intact bog surface in England.

- ✓ The museum is open Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 12pm–5pm
- £ Price £5 for adults, £3.50 concessions
- 📞 Contact Tullie House on 01228 534781

JANUARY

JAN FEB

Salisbury Festival – 'In praise of trees'

A series of walks in which English Nature officers act as natural history guides around some of Wiltshire's premier open access woodlands. The walks are as follows:

- Jan 20 Langley Wood NNR
- Jan 27 Garston Wood RSPB Reserve, Cranborne Chase
- Feb 3 Savernake Forest, Marlborough
- Feb 17 Green Lane Wood WWT Nature Reserve, Trowbridge

📞 Contact: Patrick Cashman, 01380 726344

JAN 27

Undiscovered Burnham Beeches

A 2–2.5hr stroll around the Beeches for those who want to discover some of the less trodden routes around the nature reserve, led by Chris Morris with Nick Haugh.

📞 Booking required, telephone 01753 647358

FEBRUARY

FEB 21

A Gentle Stroll

Gentle walk along easy access paths with a general history of the site, led by Jez Young with Helen Read.

📞 Booking required, telephone 01753 647358

FEB 23

Mammaliens Conference, Greenwich University, Medway Campus

A symposium discussing problems caused by non-native mammals in this country, including mink, grey squirrels and sika deer. Speakers include Chris Packham, Jeff McNeeley (IUCN), Pat Morris, Derek Yalden and John Chlorley (DEFRA).

📞 Contact: Ed Goode, 0207 498 5262

MARCH

MAR 11/13

English Nature Council Meeting, Grantham, Lincolnshire

MAR 24

Archaeological Walk

Pleasant 2hr stroll in Burnham Beeches visiting several important archaeological features, from the Iron age to the modern era. Led by Andy Barnard with Martin Hartup.

📞 Booking required, telephone 01753 647358.

A female hen harrier with her chick

Martin Withers/FLPA

Fighting against extinction

The hen harrier, one of our most spectacular and beautiful birds of prey, so evocative of the windswept uplands, is in real danger of becoming extinct as a breeding bird in England – for the second time in a century and at the hand of man. They now breed regularly on only two sites in the north of England, with just a handful attempting to nest each year.

In 2000 just five pairs bred successfully. Foot and Mouth prevented full surveys of these hills in 2001, but we know of only two successful nests, on one of the sites, with just six fledged young being reared. There are no other records of nesting attempts in 2001 in the whole of England.

Both of the regular breeding sites lie within large Special Protection Areas, designated under European legislation to protect hen harriers and other rare upland breeding birds.

Enclosure, drainage and cultivation leading to habitat loss was one of the main causes for the decline in hen harriers in earlier centuries, but the major threat now is illegal persecution. Whilst the interest in grouse shooting as a sport has contributed to the retention of a large area of moorland in England,

there have been long standing tensions between grouse moor managers and hen harriers, and other birds of prey.

Hen harriers prey on red grouse, as well as a range of other prey, and it is claimed they disrupt shoots by scaring grouse away from the drives. As a consequence, some game managers deter hen harriers from using grouse moors in a variety of ways, including illegal persecution. This can involve disturbance and the destruction of nests, eggs, adults and young, and the removal of mature heather used for nesting. Illegal persecution of hen harriers has taken place at one of the breeding sites annually since at least 1995, and at the other since 1990.

English Nature's Council regards the perilous state of the breeding hen harrier population as totally unacceptable, and

is determined that we should act to ensure it does not become extinct.

We are commencing a hen harrier recovery project to address this situation, led by our project officer Richard Saunders. We will be developing stronger links with moorland managers with the aim of achieving greater biodiversity benefits from grouse moor management. We will also work closely with landowners, farmers, keepers, volunteer raptor groups, the police and other authorities in areas supporting hen harriers. Fieldworkers will monitor the outcome of hen harrier breeding attempts in England, and use radio-tracking to follow the movements of birds after fledging. We hope that, by raising their profile and working with others, we can save hen harriers from the fate of extinction for a second time.