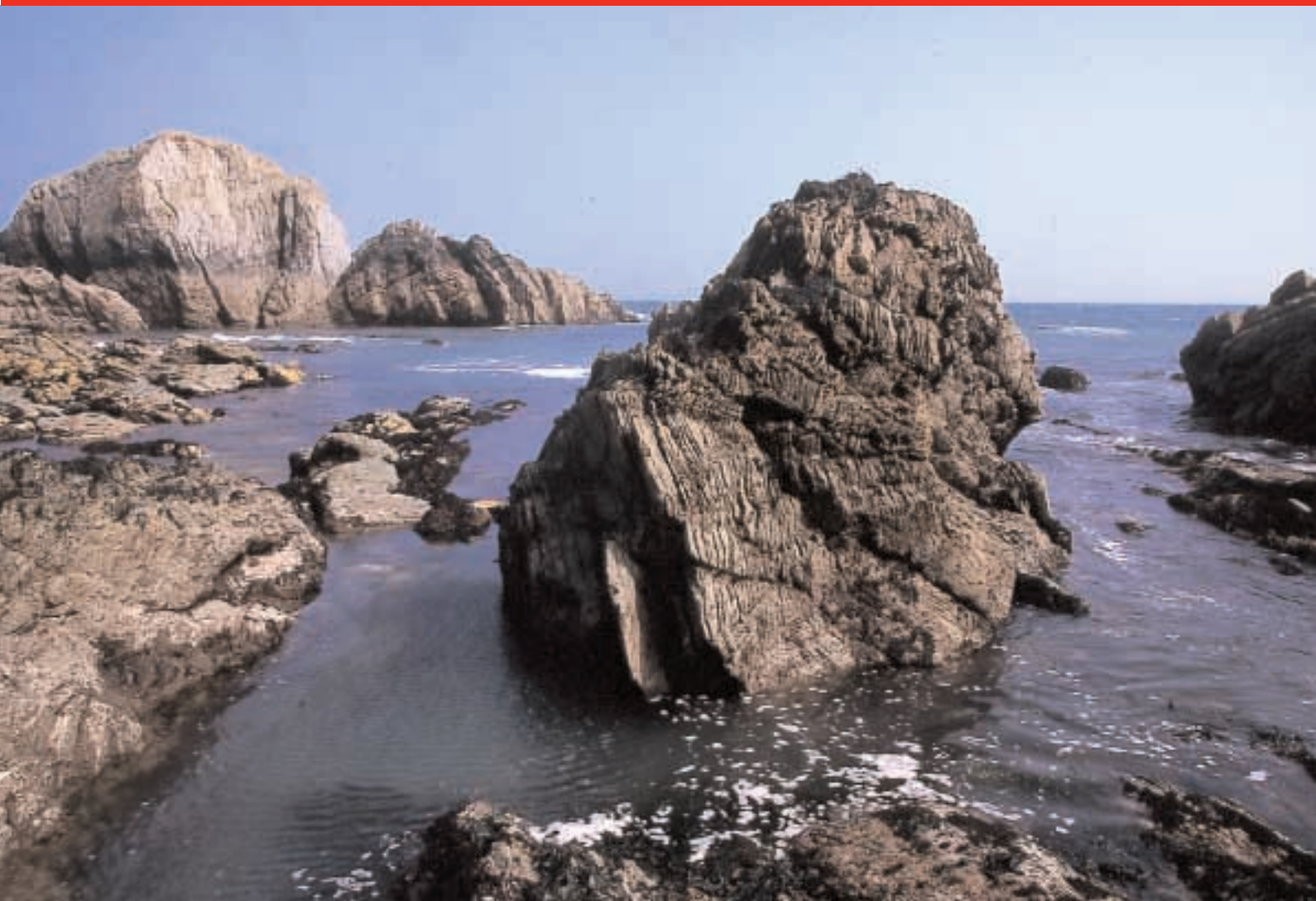


ENGLISH NATURE  
**Magazine**

Issue 66

March 2003



# Lundy Island

## England's first No Take Zone

**The flora of the fells**

A look at the two-year  
project in Cumbria

**Local biodiversity**

The story so far

**The hunt is over**

Results of the Great Nut Hunt  
are revealed



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.

For further information contact any of our offices. English Nature's National Office is: Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA. Tel: 01733 455000 Fax: 01733 568834

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](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)



Awarded for excellence

Cover picture



Cover photograph: Paul Glendell / English Nature

Low tide on the rocky shore at Lundy Island Marine Nature Reserve – England's first official No Take Zone. See the full article on page 5

English Nature magazine can now be read on the English Nature website at:  
[www.english-nature.org.uk/magazine](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/magazine)

# brief update

## New Chief Executive appointed



Dr Andrew Brown has been appointed English Nature's new Chief Executive following the tragic death of David Arnold-Forster OBE in September last year.

Dr Brown took up the reigns of acting Chief Executive when Mr Arnold-Forster was taken ill. His previous role was as

English Nature's Director of Operations and he oversaw English Nature's contribution to the development of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. He also headed the complex negotiations to secure cessation of peat extraction on three peatland sites.

Dr Brown said, "I am excited to take up the challenge of leading English Nature as Chief Executive and continue so much of the good work started by David Arnold-Forster. We have many big challenges ahead, not least ensuring that England's special wildlife and geological sites are well managed and secured for the benefit of future generations.

"I want to ensure that English Nature continues to deliver an excellent public service. A high priority will be to make sure English Nature provides opportunities for the public to experience and enjoy the rich natural heritage we have in this country."

Sir Martin Doughty, Chair of English Nature, said, "I am delighted that Andy has been appointed. He has some exciting ideas and these, coupled with his experience and knowledge, mean we can have real confidence in the future. On behalf of everyone, I wish him every success in his new post."

## New wildlife law passes test

English Nature has brought the first successful prosecution under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for third-party damage to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Court also made a Restoration Order – another legal precedent under the Act – to make the offender restore the nationally important SSSI to its condition prior to the damage. Andrew Wickens, 30, of Bramley, Hampshire, appeared before North West Wiltshire Magistrates, at Trowbridge, and pleaded guilty to the offence committed in June 2002. He was fined £4,000 and ordered to pay all English Nature's costs and comply with the Restoration Order, which includes the manner and time that it takes to restore Sutton Lane Meadows SSSI – a nationally important grassland – to its former condition. Mr Wickens admitted damaging an area of nationally important grassland in the SSSI, which included a colony of southern marsh-orchids, by dumping spoil from an adjacent pond.

Dr Andy Clements, Operations Director, English Nature said, "It demonstrates that the new powers carry heavier penalties that should act as a deterrent to anyone thinking about damaging our wildlife sites. I would also like to praise the hard work and dedication of our staff and solicitors in bringing this important prosecution."

## It's an honour



(From left) Dorset Team Manager Jim White, Joan Green and Site Manager for Hartland Moor National Nature Reserve, Tim Brodie-James.

The longest serving volunteer for English Nature's Dorset Team has been rewarded for her dedication to wildlife in the area after being awarded the MBE on the Queen's 2003 New Year Honours List. Joan Green, of Wareham, Dorset, has acted as the eyes and ears for Hartland Moor and Stoborough Heath National Nature Reserves (NNRs) for over 30 years after she moved to a bungalow which overlooks the NNRs.

## First step to completing the Fen jigsaw

A fenland farmer has sold his 83ha arable farm to The Great Fen Project – a scheme involving English Nature which aims to link up two of the last remaining fragments of wilderness in Cambridgeshire, Wood-walton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves.

The project aims to turn 3,000ha of farmland into a huge wetland nature reserve for people and wildlife. The purchase was made possible thanks to a £270,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

Other partners of the project include the Environment Agency, Huntingdonshire District Council and the Wildlife Trust for Cambridgeshire.

Farmer Stewart Papworth aims to travel the world when

he takes early retirement in three years time and hands over the keys of Darlow's Farm, north of Woodwalton Fen, near Ramsay Heights in Huntingdon, to the project.

Species from beetles to birds will have plenty of space to move around and conservation staff will find it easier to create ideal wetland conditions once all the pieces are in place. It is hoped that bittern will return to its traditional fenland home and other species such as snipe and nightingale, water voles and otters, rare dragonflies such as common hawker and scarce chaser, beautiful fen violets and insect-eating bladderwort will benefit from the project.

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the March issue of English Nature. This is my first issue as editor, and I really look forward to bringing you news and stories about our work in this and future issues.

I love March and April. The days are lengthening, there are tiny green leaf buds in the hedgerows, and the perky call of the chiff-chaff is a sure sign that spring is just about here. In High Wood, our local Wildlife Trust reserve, the sun can feel quite warm in the recently coppiced glades, and there are primroses, oxlips and a scattering of beautiful wood anemone to sit and admire. It is a great time to get out into a National Nature Reserve and feel that rush of spring in your veins (see *What's On* on page 15).

English Nature's mission is wildlife gain. We could not achieve this without the commitment, hard work and enthusiasm of our many partners. On pages 8, 9 and 10 we celebrate some of the successes of these local partnerships in our feature on local biodiversity.

Good biodiversity depends on the right political framework. Governments are now involved in a mid term review of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Many of our best-loved animals, plants and landscapes depend on an agricultural policy that supports sustainable farming practices and we report on two agri environmental schemes promoting such practices.

On page 5 we talk about a move to protect biodiversity in the marine world with the confirmation of a No Take Zone on Lundy, and on pages 14 and 15 we have the results of the Great Nut Hunt.

I hope you enjoy this edition. Please get in touch with any comments, ideas or views. I would love to hear from you.

Amanda Giles

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Although English Nature magazine does not have a regular letters page, I am always interested in receiving feedback about the magazine, or letters on subjects that may be of interest to our readers. If there is a subject that you feel would be relevant to our readership, please write to me or email me, and I will certainly consider publishing your letter in the magazine.

Contact me, Amanda Giles, at English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough, PE1 1UA, or at [amanda.giles@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:amanda.giles@english-nature.org.uk)

If this copy of English Nature magazine is not your own, and you would like to go on our mailing list to receive the magazine regularly, please contact Alison Eley, IMT, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

Or you can e-mail your details to [alison.eley@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:alison.eley@english-nature.org.uk)



# brief update

## NEWS IN SHORT

### Community conservation

Two communities in Dartmoor recently completed conservation projects under the Nature for Real initiative, part of English Nature's Action for Wildlife: the Dartmoor Biodiversity Project.

With the help of a grant from the Social, Economic and Environmental Development Programme (SEED), conservationists in the rural parish of Lydford took part in a hedgerow and dormouse survey to help promote sensitive hedgerow management, while people from Buckfastleigh created a town wildlife trail to celebrate the exceptional range and richness of the plants and animal species found there. Reports of the projects will soon be available.

### Priority habitats documented

English Nature's new leaflet: *Old meadows and pastures: ancient and threatened habitats* highlights the wildlife importance and management of old meadows and pastures in the United Kingdom.

Old meadows and pastures are rare and highly threatened habitats, hence lowland and upland types are priority habitats in the Government's Biodiversity Action Plan.

The leaflet is aimed at policy-makers, landowners and anyone else interested in finding out more about the wildlife of these treasured habitats.

Contact English Nature on 0870 1214 177 for a copy.

### Attention!

Personnel at RAF Lakenheath SSSI should now be fully aware of what they can do to help protect the large areas of flower-rich Breckland grassland and rare and scarce plant species found on the site. English Nature's Suffolk Team has produced a leaflet for them, called *'Wildlife at RAF Lakenheath'*, which has been printed by 48th Fighter Wing, United States Air Force in Europe.

Copies are available from the Suffolk Team's web page, which can be found on English Nature's website.

## Now is the time for... early migrants

Continuing in our expert series, English Nature Ornithologist Ian Carter fills us in on the migrating birds we can expect to see at this time of year...

"March is when birdwatchers begin to anticipate the coming breeding season and venture into the countryside, eager to witness the return of our earliest summer migrants. Some of the first birds to return to our shores are largely unfamiliar to non-birdwatchers, certainly less so than such familiar spring migrants as the swallow, house martin and cuckoo. However, by the time *The Times* letters' page announces the arrival of the season's first cuckoos, the following three birds will have been with us for well over a month.

In the uplands of northern and western Britain, the wheatear is a familiar sight throughout the breeding season. However, for many in lowland areas, the only chance to see this jaunty, ground-dwelling bird is during the spring and autumn migration when it can turn up in almost any open habitat.



David Chapman

It is perhaps the earliest of all our common spring migrants. Numbers tend to peak in March but usually the first make landfall on our shores in February, when they may have to brave some harsh winter weather before conditions improve.

The chiff-chaff is a small, rather drab, woodland warbler that gets its name from its repetitive but cheerfully optimistic "chiff...chaff...chiff...chaff" song. Most British breeding chiff chaffs are medium-distance migrants, wintering in southern Europe or north Africa. In recent decades some have remained in Britain for the winter, although before they give away their presence by singing in the early spring they are rarely encountered.

Because it feeds on flying insects, the sand martin cannot survive the British winter when this food source is hard to come by. It spends the winter instead, in the Sahel region of central Africa, but is quick to return north in spring and is often back in numbers by the end of March. It is a smaller and duller version of the house martin but, unlike the chiff chaff, has an unobtrusive voice and so is easily overlooked. The creation of gravel pits has increased the number of potential breeding sites in Britain, but it has fared less well in its winter quarters where drought has been a major problem. The spectacular gatherings of up to two million birds recorded on the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire, in the late 1960s are unlikely to be repeated in the near future."

(Left) A wheatear is a familiar sight throughout the breeding season

England's first official 'No Take Zone' (NTZ) has been confirmed by the Government at Lundy Island, Devon – the country's only Marine Nature Reserve (MNR).

3.3km<sup>2</sup> of sea on the east side of the reserve has been designated a NTZ which means no living natural resources, including lobsters, crabs and fish, can be taken from this area.

The zone was initially proposed by the Devon Sea Fisheries Committee and English Nature in July 2002 and has the support of local fishermen, as well as English Nature, Lundy management and advisory groups and Devon Sea Fisheries Committee.

The NTZ's long-term benefits could include:

- Enhancing populations of fish and shellfish stocks within and outside the closed area;
- Effectively establishing a refuge for fish and shellfish stocks within the closed area;
- Increasing the wealth of marine life; and
- Increasing benefits to the local economy, including tourism, diving, research and fishing.

A detailed five-year monitoring programme is being developed in conjunction with international experts

## The importance of Lundy

in other 'No Take Zones' to evaluate the effects.

Lundy is also internationally important for other marine life around the island – the 14km<sup>2</sup> reserve contains the finest example of rocky reefs in Britain, with an amazing diversity of sea life including many nationally rare and fragile species.

Its shores are covered in a thick carpet of seaweeds leading down to a kelp forest around the extreme low tide mark. All five British species of cup

coral are found here and delicate soft corals, pink sea fans and a variety of erect branching sponges can be found in the deep, sheltered conditions.

English Nature's Maritime Conservation Office for Lundy, Chris Davis, said, "The recent *Maritime State of Nature Report* highlighted the continuing degradation of the maritime environment and biodiversity by human demands and impacts. The development and implementation of NTZs are being taken forward as part of English Nature's Maritime Strategy. The Government has a vision of clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse coasts and seas."



Paul Glendell / English Nature

## Seabird Recovery Project

Lundy should support a thriving seabird population, including puffins and manx shearwaters. However, both species have been in decline since records began and in the case of the puffins, numbers are now at a critical level. Only 13 puffins were recorded on Lundy in 2000. Lundy has a thriving rat population and recent studies have shown that this is a factor in the seabird decline. English Nature, RSPB, the National Trust and Landmark Trust have set-up the Seabird Recovery Project to remove rats from the island and establish quarantine restrictions to prevent re-colonisation. This initiative was carried out during the first few months of this year, but it will be a number of years before it is known whether the work has been successful.



Manx shearwater

## The Lundy cabbage

The Lundy cabbage grows on the cliffs and cliff top slopes on the east side of Lundy. It is about the size and colour of an oilseed rape plant and Lundy is the only place in the world where it is found. It is the only plant in Britain which acts as an exclusive food source for particular insects, two flea beetles and a weevil, also found nowhere else in the world. The Lundy cabbage is threatened by Rhododendron and by grazing livestock which can devastate the plant, as it did in 2002. Leeds University has been working with English Nature, the National Trust and Landmark Trust to conserve the plant. Long-term work is underway to clear Rhododendron from the vertical sea cliffs, and some areas of cliff top are being fenced to prevent livestock having access to the plants. English Nature is also helping to fund a PhD at Leeds University to study the evolutionary history of this unique combination of plants and insects.



# WHEN NATURE CALLS

No sooner had it been declared an early spring (bumblebees around on 13 January, first frogspawn 23 January) than a fierce cold snap put us back into winter but, hopefully, by the time you read this, spring will be here.

And so the Enquiry Service will receive lots of calls from pond owners reporting "too much spawn". Well, don't worry. In this case you cannot have too much of a good thing. Most will perish so only a tiny fraction ever become frogs. To answer pond questions, I recommend *Amphibians in your garden: your questions answered*. This is based on questions actually posed by callers to the Enquiry Service and then written up by English Nature amphibian expert Jim Foster (or 'The Frogman' as we call him). Phone me on 01733 455100 for a copy.

Did you see the pictures of members of the police force in Wales, armed to the teeth and with helicopter support after someone claimed that a dog was killed by a "big cat?" The actual culprit turned out to be, after DNA analysis of saliva, either another dog or a badger.

The Enquiry Service does receive reports and questions about the presence of pumas, leopards and lynx in the countryside and the position on this can, I think, be summed up as 'unproven'. We remember the eminent Victorian naturalist who stated that no large mammals remained to be discovered. Shortly afterwards the okapi, a large mammal, was found in the jungles of Africa.

For those of you interested in adders and slow worms, Froglife is running a survey. If you know of sites, contact them on 01986 873733 for a questionnaire.

Finally, on one of Bill Oddie's marvellous BBC2 nature rambles, he saw a young water rail, which he memorably likened to "a mole on stilts". So if we get any calls about moles on stilts we will know what it is. Unless, of course, it is a mole on stilts!

By Dick Seamons  
English Nature's Enquiry Service

The two-year Flora of the Fells project is a partnership led by English Nature and Friends of the Lake District, and the aim is to involve groups across the region.

"The Cumbrian landscape is so well known, yet people often overlook the native plants that are the very fabric of that landscape," explained Simon Webb of English Nature's Cumbria team.

"There has been a growing awareness among the team here that the flora of the fells is undersold and undervalued – many visitors walk up Helvellyn, for instance, and see how beautiful it is without realising the significance of the vegetation. This project aims to both celebrate the upland flora we have here and to look at how we can improve things for the future."

The Cumbrian uplands, including the high fells of the Lake District and the North Pennines, are home to a number of rare species including alpine bartsia, yellow marsh saxifrage, mountain avens and spring gentian.

"There is an incredible diversity of plants in Cumbria, some of which are usually only seen in parts of Scotland or in Arctic countries like Norway and Sweden," said Project Officer, Martin Varley.

"There is an incredible diversity of plants in Cumbria, some of which are usually only seen in parts of Scotland or in Arctic countries like Norway and Sweden"



Yellow marsh saxifrage



Alpine bartsia

"However, their method of survival means that we often walk right past without seeing them. What we hope to do is increase people's enjoyment

and understanding of the upland countryside by telling the story of how these plants have survived here since the Ice Age."

The idea is that the more people understand about the region's flora, the better protected it will be, and the project will focus on those who work on the land as well as those who enjoy it.

"Hill farming is changing, particularly since Foot and Mouth," Martin said. "Farmers are looking for new sources of income and agricultural policy is shifting towards support for environmentally-friendly land management. Improving upland flora through government schemes helps support agriculture and makes for a better day out for the visitor."

To find out more about the project, contact Martin Varley on 01539 720788 or e-mail [martin-varley@fld.org.uk](mailto:martin-varley@fld.org.uk)

Very much a community project, feedback from local people interested in the region's flora will be a key feature of planning for the future.

"This is not simply a project where English Nature and Friends of the Lake District tell everyone what they think," Martin added. "Cumbria's mountain landscapes are important to everyone, from visitors and tourists to landowners and locals, and we're encouraging other organisations and individuals to feed into the project, because the landscape belongs to us all."

## Project initiatives

The Flora of the Fells project includes a number of initiatives to raise awareness across the community:

**On line** – a new website with the latest news from the Flora of the Fells project goes live following the official launch in April. Access it at: [www.floraofthefells.com](http://www.floraofthefells.com)

**In print** – the *Flora of the Fells* book is due out in late spring.

**On foot** – an extensive series of guided walks is planned as part of the project, which will involve the expertise of groups including Cumbrian Wildlife Trust, East Cumbrian Countryside Project and Lake District National Park Authority. Walkers' views on the flora and how it should be preserved will feed into the work of the project.

**On display** – an exhibition promoting a vision for the future of the flora of the fells will tour local communities across the region, including libraries, tourist information offices and village halls.

# The flora of the fells

The majestic landscape of the Cumbrian Fells draws visitors from far and wide, but few take time to admire the beauty of the native flora. English Nature is at the forefront of a new project to raise awareness of the fragile ecology underfoot.

Looking across the Buttermere Fells in the Lake District, one of the areas highlighted in a new project led by English Nature and Friends of the Lake District looking at mountain flora

Martin Varley / Friends of the Lake District

Peter Wakely / English Nature

Peter Wakely / English Nature



# Local biodiversity – the story so far

A conservation milestone was reached earlier this month with the publication of *Natural Partners – the achievements of local biodiversity partnerships in England*. This key report, a sister document to the England Biodiversity Strategy, is the first overview of local biodiversity work and should help even more people get involved in the future.

Wildlife gardening in the heart of London, surveying water voles in the East Midlands and putting up nest boxes for tree sparrows in Wakefield; these are just three of several thousand Local Biodiversity Action Plan activities taking place across the country every year.



The report is available to download from the UK Biodiversity website: [www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk)

The Government's UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1994) set out the activities needed to meet national priorities for conserving wildlife. But to achieve success, it was recognised that we also need to take a local perspective, so local partnerships have been established to protect wildlife and habitats special to their area.

The partnership members are typically from organisations such as The Wildlife Trusts, local authorities, English Nature, charities and voluntary bodies. Each partnership has developed its own set of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), the results of which go forward to help implement plans at the national level. These plans also reflect the values of local people and provide a focus for local initiatives.

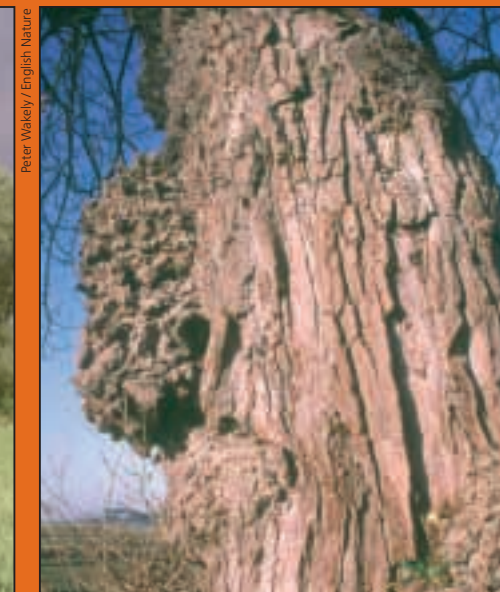
*Natural Partners* celebrates the many achievements of the local BAP process with over 100 partnerships now covering most of England. The report has been prepared on behalf of the England Biodiversity Group with support from many organisations including English Nature.

Sir Martin Doughty, English Nature Chair, said, "English Nature is committed to a strong local biodiversity partnership. Local action is key to the achievement of national Biodiversity Action Plan

targets for priority species and habitats. We welcome this report, which we hope will encourage greater involvement, attracting new partners to help build on successes to date."

Using a wide range of case studies from local biodiversity partnerships, and experiences from many national partner organisations, the report:

- explains how LBAPs help deliver the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) in England;
- illustrates benefits to many different partners of their involvement in LBAPs;
- demonstrates some of the benefits for biodiversity and society; and
- explores future directions for achieving biodiversity objectives locally.



Two of the remaining native black poplars left in England

## How Local Biodiversity Action Plans help

### The water vole

- 49 LBAPs include the water vole as a priority species.
- Locally organised water vole surveys have taken place in 34 counties.
- Upland sites in Derbyshire and urban sites throughout the country have been found to support larger populations than expected.
- 30 local projects have been established. Local Wildlife Trusts and the Environment Agency have led many of these, with other partners including English Nature, water companies, British Waterways and over 50 local authorities.
- 23 projects offer advice to landowners and 20 are carrying out habitat improvement. Many include volunteer training, talks and publicity, survey and monitoring and control of predators, such as mink.

### The native black poplar

- Five years of surveys place the current population at around 6,000 – double the previous estimate but still perilously low.
- At least 6,000 cuttings are being propagated through LBAP projects.
- Tree nurseries are being run by colleges, community groups, garden centres and primary schools.
- The National Forest, covering parts of the Midlands with its own complementary LBAP, planted a black poplar as its four millionth tree, gaining publicity for the tree's plight and potential recovery.
- LBAPs have linked conservation activity with traditional celebrations.



A LBAP priority species – water vole

## English Nature and LBAPs

Through our national and area teams, English Nature supports and helps co-ordinate LBAP activity by:

- national support and advice – funding two LBAP national co-ordinators since 2001;
- participation in biodiversity partnerships for all counties – working with local partners to help them deliver their plans;
- allocating funding;
- providing support for Local Record Centres – to help LBAPs document their findings (e.g. species and habitat surveys); and
- helping local partnerships plan their activities and link to the national plans through the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS).

"Local BAPs involve a wider range of organisations and individuals than any other level of the BAP process. Partners bring in-depth knowledge of local wildlife and of the communities they themselves are rooted in. Broad partnerships and LBAPs' local identity provide direct points of contact for anyone wishing to know more or take action themselves. Partners also actively encourage others to participate as their plan is put into action. Working in this way, LBAP partnerships have proven their ability to deliver action



for biodiversity, where this is most needed."

Charlotte Gault,  
England Local Biodiversity Action Facilitator



## Local biodiversity benefits from well aimed funding

English Nature's East Midlands team has targeted spending at Local BAP priorities through the Action for Wildlife grant scheme. In recognition of the efficient way that co-ordinated LBAPs can deliver great biodiversity gain for small sums of money, £75,000 from English Nature has been matched by landfill tax credits and contributions from other partners, and provided £150,000 to be spent on projects which would otherwise not have been developed, such as:

- Habitat restoration – lowland calcareous and neutral grassland
- Habitat creation – reedbed, hedgerows and ponds
- Nest box production – newly housed bats and barn owls
- Surveys – re-discovered water voles

The three-year scheme is administered by the Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire LBAP Co-ordinators, keeping operational costs to a minimum and attracting applications from groups who might not have considered applying to national sources of funding. As awareness of the grants has increased, many high quality applications have been submitted and it has been oversubscribed in all three years. The scheme has widened involvement in the three LBAPs and generated considerable good publicity.

Two good examples of successful and sustainable projects in Leicestershire and Rutland are bracken rolling at Charnwood Lodge National Nature Reserve and housing owls at Cribbs Meadow National Nature Reserve and on neighbouring farmland

Senior Reserves Officer at the trust, Neil Pilcher, said, "The trust secured funds to purchase a bracken roller and have, to date, cleared around 5ha of Charnwood Lodge NNR. Before the roller, the site was cleared by hand and we had only managed to clear half an acre before the purchase in 2000.

"Over the next 10 years, we hope to create a mosaic of heather, bilberry, grassland and bracken on the site to encourage a variety of birds and species one would expect to see in the area, including tree pipits and skylarks.

"British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) also applied for funds on behalf of the Hawk and Owl Trust to purchase 10 barn owl nesting boxes. One box was put at Cribbs Meadow NNR and the rest were taken by farmers and landowners to help the birds survive in the area. Local knowledge from the Hawk and Owl Trust meant we were able to help barn owls which are struggling locally because of fewer mature trees and traditional barns."

## Biodiversity beats summer boredom for Westminster youngsters

Westminster Biodiversity Partnership has been working with 11 to 18-year-olds to improve their awareness of local biodiversity and develop opportunities for action. As part of the City Council's Summer Education Programme, the partnership's education and awareness working group has developed a two-week programme, focusing on different BAP habitats and species each day.

The programme is designed to open the eyes of youngsters to encourage them to enjoy and examine the wildlife around them, which they may never have even noticed before. Birds and species which can be found in the area include bats, birds of prey such as kestrels, sparrow hawks and falcons, and migrating birds, including swifts and house martins.

Youngsters also get the opportunity to get some practical gardening experience and in 2001 participants helped out in the probably one of the most famous garden in Britain – the Prime Minister's. The London Wildlife Trust had built a pond in the garden and the youngsters were invited to examine the wildlife it had helped encourage and they also worked with the gardeners.

Green-fingered youngsters visited the most famous garden in England – the Prime Minister's

Education Manager for London Wildlife Trust, Sandi Bain, said, "The youngsters didn't meet the Prime Minister, but they enjoyed the day. Schools are amazed at how popular wildlife clubs are and how enthusiastic children, especially younger children, are about the natural world around them. For me, I enjoy showing youngsters what else is out there. It is great to see them light up when they learn or see something new. Hopefully this sets them up for the future and helps them take more of an active involvement in and responsibility for the wild places near their homes."



Sandi Bain / London Wildlife Trust

The project has been funded and resourced by English Nature, the New Opportunities Fund, Westminster City Council and London Wildlife Trust and was extended to include Kensington and Chelsea in 2002.

Westminster Biodiversity Partnership includes London Wildlife Trust, London Zoo, Central Royal Parks Wildlife Group, London Natural History Society, Royal Parks Agency, Westminster City Council, Thorney Island Society and Grosvenor Estates.

# Night school

The winter now over, bats are coming out of hibernation and are filling our evening skies. Yet they're one of our most misunderstood mammals. Fortunately, there is a process of raising awareness to ensure their survival.

Few species bring as many different interests together as bats. While trees and caves may be their natural roosting habitat, building roof space has become a common alternative, and this can often throw them into contact with those who use, maintain and own such properties.

"Our work brings us into contact with a broad range of people who affect bat conservation," says Amy Coyte, Chief Executive of the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT). An umbrella body for over 90 voluntary bat groups in the UK and lead Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) partner for bats, it provides training for specialists such as builders, architects and tree surgeons so that they can work in a manner sensitive to bats. "Much of our time is also spent bringing together key partners so that we can build a consensus on a practical way forward for the bat. That, and the conservation work we've been able to do in the UK, has been largely down to the longstanding partnership we have with English Nature."

This biodiversity partnership is a strong foundation from which to promote bat BAP objectives, but is not just restricted to national issues. English Nature has been working with voluntary bat groups at a local level since the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the BCT since it were conceived. "Thanks to the partnership, we've been able to develop a good system of providing advice to the thousands of householders who call us every year about bats roosting in their properties," says English Nature Vertebrate Ecologist Tony Mitchell-Jones. "We can alert local bat groups who can then arrange for someone to visit in person to provide reassurance and advice. You can save a lot of roosts just by educating people."

This is especially the case in our cities where our most common bats – the soprano pipistrelle and common pipistrelle – are most prevalent. "Naturally, there are a lot of buildings, including houses, with suitable access points which can make great maternity and hibernation sites," says Frances Falconer, Administrative and Species Casework Officer with English Nature's London team. "Then there are bridges, tunnels and a good network of green spaces with mature trees to roost in. But numbers are declining as suitable habitat disappears due to householder's fears and building

development. We're working closely with volunteers at the London Bat Group to raise awareness and change attitudes towards bats. We'll be stepping up our efforts over the next year to combat the decline."

Part of that will be through the London Bat Steering Group, responsible for overseeing the Species Action Plan for bats in the capital, itself part of the London BAP. As well as English Nature and the London Bat Group, this includes partners as diverse as the Greater

**One pipistrelle can eat up to 3,000 midges in a night.**

London Authority, the BCT, the Groundwork Trust and the London Wildlife Trust to name a few. Part will also be the kind of grass roots effort that local groups do best: bat walks, talks, community newsletters and other attempts to engage with people on the ground.

"For all of the associations with blood sucking and horror films, bats are an important part of our cultural and natural heritage and people do like to see them. Go out at dusk and you can watch them flying out of their roosts for a good hour or two as the sun sets..."



Hugh Clark / Bat Conservation Trust



# CAP Reform: A brighter future for the farmed environment?

Revised proposals for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are welcome, however while they discourage intensification of agriculture they still fall short on points that would ensure a better managed farmed environment.

The CAP has undoubtedly had a huge influence on the countryside. Its coupling of financial support for farmers to the production of crops and livestock has encouraged intensive agriculture and in turn, a dramatic loss of farmland wildlife.



The Sheep Quota Purchase Scheme is designed to reduce overgrazing and the loss of wildlife habitat

Hope for the farmed environment, however, may come from recent proposals from Brussels, the core of which is the break in the link between farm support and production. Instead farmers would receive a farm income payment based on historic levels of support and not linked to the quantity they produce. This new income payment would be made conditional on the farmers maintaining “good agricultural condition” on their land – but it is unclear exactly what this means and how effective it would be in protecting the environment. Needless to say, the implications for farming and the countryside are huge.

English Nature broadly welcomes the change from the previous system of production subsidy – but the devil will be in the detail. We are working closely with Defra and others to fully

understand the implications of the proposals and what they could mean for wildlife and the countryside. However it is already clear that the proposals present potential risks as well as opportunities.

One of the very disappointing aspects of the proposals is the amount of subsidy being shifted from production support to rural development and agri-environment schemes is much lower than earlier proposals. Yet many farmers are increasingly using green-farming schemes to help them farm in a wildlife-friendly way. The loss of this new money for schemes like Countryside Stewardship, Environmentally Sensitive Areas and the new Entry Level Stewardship Scheme puts greater emphasis on ensuring the rest of the proposals can be used to protect the environment.

We hope the proposals will not derail the roll-out of the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme in 2005. This new scheme is currently being piloted and was launched earlier this month by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It has particular appeal and relevance to farmers like Nicholas Watts (see over) who



Nicholas Watts sprinkles a few seeds of winter barley among his winter wheat crop. On cold wet days insects go into hiding and the few grains provide a valuable food source for nesting reed buntings

already manage parts of their farm well for wildlife, and will be rewarded for continuing to do so. Farms with little remaining wildlife will also be able to enter the scheme as long as they put wildlife features back.

English Nature has been closely involved in the development of the Entry Level Scheme and believes that, by promoting sustainable and more wildlife friendly farming systems, it could literally buy back our lost farmland.

“All of the scientific evidence is telling us that if we want to see a reversal in the decline of our wildlife heritage, then we need to change the way the farmed countryside is managed,” says Alastair Rutherford, Head of Agriculture, English Nature. “But to achieve that change we need to work with farmers, reward wildlife friendly farming and find new farming techniques and policies, which are not literally costing the earth.”



Skylark

## “It’s all about taking pride in wildlife and the countryside...”

Runner-up in the National Farmer’s Union Biodiversity Awards 2002, Nicholas Watts has introduced a broad range of wildlife-friendly measures to his 700 hectare arable farm in the Lincolnshire Fens ①. He is now considering taking part in the East Midlands pilot of the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme.

“It’s all about taking pride in wildlife and the countryside,” says Nicholas, “and joining the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme would certainly help pay for some of the work I do already and enable me to consider doing more.”

Indeed, over the last five years he has introduced a reservoir, which is now a regular nesting area for terns, sown 12 wildflower meadows and laid over a mile of hedges. Some 18 miles of two metre grass strips and ponds and other wildlife measures have been introduced under a Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The application of these – and many more – measures has been rewarded with the presence of Biodiversity Action Plan species such as grey partridge, skylark, linnet, reed and corn bunting, turtle dove, tree sparrow and song thrush. The plant BAP species corn gromwell also grows on the farm.



Reed bunting

“On a national scale, I think the scheme’s bound to catch the interest of a lot of farmers,” adds Nicholas. “There are already a lot who are nearly there anyway, having old tracts of grassland that could be of huge benefit to wildlife.”

## The Entry Level Scheme

The aim of the scheme is to increase the amount of sustainable farming taking place so that there is a noticeable difference in the way that the majority of farmland is managed.

From the beginning of this month, four two-year pilots will be taking place across England. It is hoped that around 50 farmers in each pilot area will participate and if this proves successful, the scheme will be rolled-out across the country. Key features of the scheme include:

- Provision of an annual, flat rate payment to farmers.
- The need by farmers to identify important environmental features and areas on their farms and make a commitment to carry out simple environmental management activities. They will select these themselves from a wide-ranging list of options.
- Each option will be worth a certain number of points. If the farmer achieves a target number, he will be guaranteed entry to the scheme and payment.



Results from the 2001 Great Nut Hunt have been released – and it's good news for our endangered dormouse as 60 new habitat sites have been identified across the United Kingdom.

# The results are in

A total of 136 sites were documented all together, 76 of which had already identified in the first Great Nut Hunt, carried out in 1993.

The second hunt, launched in September 2001, attracted 1,200 dormouse detectives, who collected over 50,000 hazelnuts across the country and sent them to the 'Chief Nutter' at the London offices of the Mammals Trust UK, where they were inspected for signs of dormouse teeth marks.

However, there is still much to do to help sustain this much-loved creature, made famous as the butt of the Mad Hatter's frustrations in the literary classic, *Alice in Wonderland*. Analysis of data collected as part of the monitoring scheme showed dormice are continuing to decline nationally. Currently there are only 800 known sites around Britain. Dormice have disappeared from more than half of their historic range in the last century, with almost a 20 per cent drop in the last decade. It is thought that dormice in the north of England are suffering the most, with almost a 50 per cent drop in numbers.

## Top tips for land managers to help dormice:

Fence stock out of woodland to allow it to develop a dense shrub layer.

Thin canopy trees to create small glades.

Don't cut hedges every year, but leave them to grow up to 12 feet tall.

Plant up gaps in hedges, especially where they connect patches of woodland.



Dr Paul Bright, who carried out the research on behalf of Mammals Trust, English Nature, Countryside Council for Wales and Center Parcs, said, "This research is very significant as it is vital we know where dormice are in order to protect them. However, dormice are declining nationally and we must continue to do all we can to both halt and reverse this loss."

Dr Valerie Keeble, Chief Executive of Mammals Trust UK, said, "The discovery of 60 new dormouse sites is encouraging but, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done if we are to preserve dormice for the future."

## Wild facts The dormouse

- The Latin name for the common dormouse is *Muscardinus avellanarius*.
- It spends up to three quarters of its life asleep.
- It hibernates when food is scarce to conserve energy.
- It lives for up to five years.
- Its vital statistics are – head and body length 65-85mm, weight 15-30 grams.
- It can be distinguished from other mouse-sized mammals by its thick, bushy tail. It has orange/brown fur on its upper-parts, yellow/white underneath and a white throat.
- It can be found across most of Europe. In Britain, it is found mostly in southern counties, although it is present in a few scattered locations in the Lake District and mid-Wales.
- It inhabits deciduous woodland with scrub, coppiced woodlands and hedgerows.
- It eats seeds, flowers, fruit and insects. Nuts, including chestnuts, acorns and hazelnuts, are important food sources prior to hibernation.
- It spends the day sleeping in nests made from honeysuckle bark, grass, moss and leaves, which are typically about 15cm in diameter and woven to entirely surround the animal.

## Case study

### North West England Dormouse Action Group

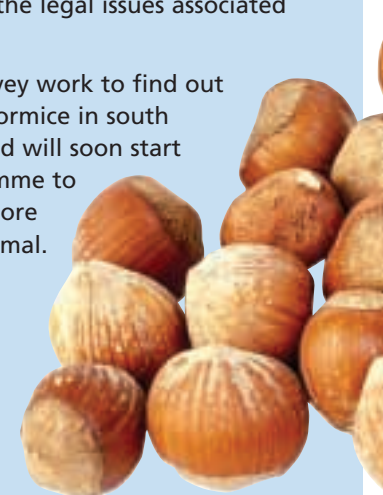
In 2001, Mark Rawlins, from English Nature's Cumbria Team, came across something which caused much excitement – a dormouse nest. It was a great discovery because it was found in dense gorse at Holme Park Quarry, far away from known dormice habitats in Rusland Valley and Duddon Valley. This led to a re-evaluation of the potential for dormice distribution across the whole of Cumbria and North Lancashire.

The North West England Dormouse Action Group, currently made up of English Nature, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Cumbria Broadleaves, Forestry Commission and Rural Development Scheme, was established in early 2002. Its aim is to establish an appropriate course of action to survey and raise awareness of this very special little mammal.

So far, the group has run a training weekend for land managers, which gave a basic introduction to the biology of dormice and allowed participants to see excellent dormouse habitat management and survey techniques at Roudsea Wood and Mosses NNR. It also covered the legal issues associated with protecting dormice.

The group is planning future survey work to find out more about the distribution of dormice in south Cumbria and north Lancashire and will soon start a countrywide education programme to tell as many people as possible more about this much loved little mammal.

If you have any information on dormice in this area, contact the group via Corrie Bruemmer, English Nature, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxemholme Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7RL, telephone 01539 792800.



## WHAT'S ON? GUIDE

### MARCH

**MAR 26** The Last of Winter guided walk will take place at Stodmarsh NNR, Kent  
**Contact: David Feast, 07767 321058**

**MAR 26&28** As part of Wrexham Science Week, NEWI College will host a slideshow of 'creatures of the mosses' on 26 March at 7.30pm and Bersham Heritage Centre will host the show at 2pm on March 28.  
**Contact: Joan Daniels, 01948 880362**

### APRIL

**APR 20** The Secret Wood – there will be something for everybody at this event at Forge Valley NNR, near Scarborough, on 20 April to 5 May.  
**Contact: Craig Ralston or Emma Leighton on 01904 435500 or 07786 336226**

**APR 22** Explore Forge Valley Woods NNR, North Yorkshire, with local farmer and wildflower expert Chris Wilson.  
**Contact: Craig Ralston, 01904 435500**

**APR 23** Springtime on Stodmarsh – a guided walk takes place on 23 April at Stodmarsh NNR, Kent.  
**Contact: David Feast, 07767 321058**

**APR 30** Join English Nature's Peter Roworth to explore Forge Valley Woods NNR through the eye of a camera on 30 April for a Landscape Photography Course.  
**Contact: Craig Ralston, 01904 435500**

### MAY

**MAY 4** Creative writing afternoon and picnic tutored by author Gladys Mary Coles at Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses NNR.  
**Contact: Joan Daniels, 01948 880362**

**MAY 10** Birds of the Mosses Guided Walk at Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses NNR on 10 May.  
**Contact: Joan Daniels, 01948 880362**

**MAY 11** Guided walks from 10.30am to 13.30pm at Thorne Moor, Thorne and Hatfield Moor, near Doncaster, on 11 May.  
**Contact: Darren Whitaker on 01405 818819/07970 730929**

**MAY 11** Open Day at Old Winchester Hill NNR, Hampshire, on 11 May. Local naturalist and BBC Presenter Chris Packham will open a new interpretive unit and display at 11am.  
**Contact: Hampshire NNR, 02380 286410**

**MAY 17** Seal watch at Teesmouth NNR, Cleveland, on 17 May. Each guided tour lasts an hour, booking is essential.  
**Contact: Mike Leakey, 01429 853325**

**MAY 17** 15 places are available for a guided walk on Holkham NNR, Norfolk, on 17 May. The walk takes place between 9 and 11am and is free.  
**Contact: Ron Harold, 01328 711183**

For further details visit [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)



Hen harriers had a better year than usual in 2002, thanks partly to reported sightings from across the country. The Hen Harrier Recovery Project is dependent on spring sightings to protect the birds through the breeding season.

# Sightings for survival



One of two female hen harriers that successfully bred on a private grouse moor within Bowland Fells Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) / Special Protection Area (SPA).

Richard Saunders / English Nature

## Case study Geltsdale

During the 2002 breeding season two nests were monitored at the Geltsdale study site on RSPB land. Although there had been six eggs in the first nest, no live fledglings were hatched. When another pair of hen harriers arrived and nested close by, they were put under 24 hour watch by volunteers from the local community, RSPB staff and Hen Harrier Recovery Project field workers. It was difficult to monitor the birds because everyone had to stay 1 kilometre away from the nest during the day in order not to disturb the birds, but at night they could move in closer, concealing themselves in heather and retreating before dawn. From four eggs, two young fledged and were wing tagged and fitted with radio transmitters to monitor their dispersal.

“Hen harrier nest sites can be protected, but we need to know where they are,” explained Richard Saunders, English Nature’s Hen Harrier Recovery Project Officer. Monitoring known nests showed that 22 chicks were reared, with nine birds tracked over the winter.

Young successfully fledged from seven out of 11 nests, during a breeding season which also saw hen harriers nesting in Cornwall for the first time in a century.

Nine birds fitted with radio transmitters were monitored as they moved from their breeding grounds to wintering quarters. The hen harriers were tracked during the winter, as they hunted over areas of rough grassland below the moorland edge. Small breeding populations mixed as birds moved between their isolated nesting sites, so forming a more fluid wintering population.

“In order to build on last year’s successes, we need people to contact us early in 2003



Stephen Murphy / English Nature

One of the six male chicks that fledged from a nest in the Yorkshire Dales

with any sightings of the birds so we can locate nests early. The more nests that we can find, the more we can learn about this vulnerable species in the breeding season,” said Richard.

The Hen Harrier Recovery Project received unconfirmed reports of breeding hen harriers from two separate places of private land, away from the main study sites.

“Unfortunately these birds were not reported at the time. If we can confirm the presence of breeding harriers in these and other areas during 2003, this would be another important step towards restoring the former range of breeding harriers in England,” Richard added.

Spring 2002 sightings of hen harriers were reported across the country, including Lincolnshire, North Norfolk, and Exmoor. The map shows key areas where both male and female birds were present in suitable breeding habitat.

- ① Geltsdale
- ② Northumberland
- ③ Bowland Fells
- ④ Yorkshire Dales
- ⑤ South Pennines and Peak District
- ⑥ Cornwall



Please report any sightings to the Hen Harrier Recovery Project. Include, if possible: the location (with OS grid reference); date; time; weather; colour of left and right wing tags; any identification number/letter, and any information about habitat and the bird’s activity.

Contact Richard Saunders on 01539 792800, or e-mail [richard.saunders@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:richard.saunders@english-nature.org.uk)