ENGLISH NATURE

# ENGLISH NATURE Magazine

Issue 68 July 2003

# Towards a sustainable future

## Balancing modern living and the environment

### Town and Country
Building and conservation hand in hand

### Safe port of call
The many demands on estuaries

### Reaping the rewards
Action for our grasslands

Issue 68
July 2003



English Nature magazine can now be read on the English Nature website at:
**www.english-nature.org.uk/magazine**

# brief update

## 21st century ARKive

Mike Wilkes/naturepl.com

Tree sparrow

Next time you want to find out what colour flowers the 'pheasant's eye' has, or where to find the 'earth tongue', click onto www.arkive.org for up-to-date information and stunning images of some of the world's most endangered species.

ARKive is leading the virtual conservation effort by finding, sorting, cataloguing and copying the key records of species, and building them into a comprehensive online digital library.

Films and photographs are increasingly providing important scientific and historical records for many threatened species. These records are one of the most emotive tools that environmentalists can use to educate the public about the need for conservation.

So far, approximately 500 species profiles have been written by Paul Lacey from English Nature and Lianne Evans from ARKive, and there are more on the way.

For further information visit the ARKive website on www.arkive.org

## European Geopark

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust

Perseverance and Pinnacle Hills, Malvern Hills – Precambrian Malverns Complex granites and diorites

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust has mounted a bid to bring European Geopark status to its local area.

This would be the first in England and a great boost to the local area, prompting funding for geoconservation work, and raising awareness of earth heritage both locally and across the UK.

Geoparks must have at least one or more sites of scientific importance – of geological, archaeological ecological or cultural value – and a management plan designed to faster sustainable development. A European Geopark must contain a certain number of geological sites of particular importance in terms of their scientific quality, rarity, aesthetic appeal or educational value.

Director of the Earth Heritage Trust, Dr Peter Oliver, is confident the Hereford and Worcester 1,000 square kilometre region meets these requirements.

"The proposed area has five Sites of Special Scientific Interest for geology and over 40 Regionally Important Geological Sites, some of which are Geological Conservation Review sites," he said. The area includes the Malvern Hills, the Cotswold Escarpment, glacial Lake Wigmore and the Black Mountains.

## Go Wild at Kew

**Diana Phillips, Communications Officer with English Nature, takes a walk on the wild side at Kew's summer festival.**

I had never been inside a badgers' sett before, but it was pretty cosy; an area to sleep, another to store your food, even a scratching post – quite a 'home from home!' I hadn't shrunk, or changed species! I attended the launch of 'Go Wild', Kew Gardens' summer biodiversity festival.

A human-sized badger sett has been built to help visitors find out more about these intriguing creatures.

Peter Bennett

Defra garden, designed by RHS Chelsea Flower Show winner Mary Reynolds

The sett is just one of a host of features that demonstrate the interdependence of plants, animals and humans upon one another, and to highlight the beauty of Britain's biodiversity.

English Nature, which has long been a partner of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (in particular though the Species Recovery Programme), has lent its support to the festival by sponsoring the interpretation boards surrounding a traditional wheat field – named 'self raising flowers'. The field has been sown with wheat and arable wild flowers such as cornflowers, corn cockles, corn poppies and crimson clover. The information for the boards was supplied by Jill Sutcliffe of English Nature who worked with Katie Steel of Kew Gardens.

Other exhibits include: a treetop walkway (above right), high up in the canopy of oak and redwood; art works; planting ideas to help you attract butterflies and birds to your garden; and a field hospital – an Edwardian herbalist's garden

Peter Bennett

building – which explores some of the medicinal uses of native plants in the past. The Defra Biodiversity Garden designed by Mary Reynolds, who won a gold medal at Chelsea last year, is also recommended.

Kew is renowned for its scientific contributions worldwide, but is not so well known by the public for its work on conservation in this country. Through 'Go Wild', Kew aims to demonstrate the conservation messages at the heart of its work.

For further information visit the Kew website on www.rbgkew.org

## Promoting biodiversity – a matter of trust

Since December 2001, Joanne Hodgkins has been working as Biodiversity Officer for the National Trust. Her role, which is part-funded by English Nature for three years, is to promote the National Trust's contribution to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

With approximately 250,000 hectares of wonderful landscapes and gardens, such as the dramatic Kynance Cove and the Lizard in Cornwall, the spectacular chalk cliffs of the Seven Sisters in Sussex, the stunning estate at Ashridge in the Chilterns and the internationally renowned Fountains Abbey, the National Trust has a large proportion of the country's biodiversity under its protection. This is a massive opportunity to deliver positive action to conserve biodiversity and input into the UK BAP.

The National Trust-owned buildings and gardens provide a range of different environments for many species, such as lichens, flowering plants, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

For more information contact Joanne Hodgkins on 01285 651818.

## EDITORIAL

We have had a wonderfully warm spring and summer already and most of us will have been enjoying outdoor living as much as possible. July and August are holiday months and, when we visit the coast or countryside, we tend to take for granted the beautiful surroundings in which we relax and recuperate.

Yet growing consumer demands can threaten our most precious landscapes.

In this issue we look at how development can take place in a sustainable way. Sustainable development is about improving quality of life for everyone, now and in the future, without damaging the natural environment or over-exploiting natural resources.

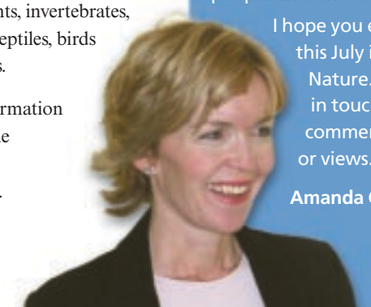
If we continue to live the way we do now, natural resources will be used up quicker than they can be replaced and the living systems, which support our population, would deteriorate and ultimately perish.

Many of our ports are in or near wildlife-rich areas. In 'Safe port of call' (pages 8 and 9) we see that by taking environmental issues into account at the start of planning a port development adverse impacts on local wildlife can be minimised.

Similarly, at the Cambourne town development (pages 6-7), we see the importance of building strong partnerships, again at the planning stage, in order to reach win-win solutions for wildlife, people and the economy.

I hope you enjoy reading this July issue of English Nature. Please get in touch with any comments, ideas or views.

**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**

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 email your details to alison.eley@english-nature.org.uk**

ENGLISH NATURE

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

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

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

CHARTER MARK
Awarded for excellence

Cover picture

Cover photograph: Phoenix

School children from Monkfield Primary School in Cambourne celebrate the instalment of Cambourne's largest resident, the 6.5 metre wind turbine
See the full article on pages 6-7.

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# brief update

## WHEN NATURE CALLS

Things have been buzzing here, I can tell you! On 16 May *The Times, Telegraph* and the *Mail* all published articles on a new leaflet produced by English Nature and the National Trust entitled *Help save the Bumblebee – get more buzz from your garden!* All hell broke loose as the Enquiry Service phone lines were jammed and answer phones swamped – all day. One of our three staff was wisely sunning herself by a pool in Florida and one of the answer phones broke under the strain. What fun it all was! We were very pleased with the response, which included about 1,500 downloads of the leaflet from our website. Let's hope this contributes to a revival in the fortunes of the dear old bumblebee. And apologies to those who could not get through to us on that hectic day.

July can be the warmest month of the year, which will probably mean calls about snakes in gardens. We have a terrific new booklet on the subject, *Reptiles in your garden*, a companion to our amphibian booklet and similar in style. Phone us for copies (01733 455100). We also have a new leaflet on *Plants for wildlife-friendly gardens*. Gardens are 'in' now!

Finally, as an ageing hippy, I was reminded of Frank Zappa's seminal record, *Weasels ripped my flesh*, when the antics of the late Boris, the hand-reared badger, hit the headlines. I expect, as he was reared on hands, that when poor Mr Fitzgerald bent down and offered his, Boris thought it was food! We had no calls at all from people who were nervous of badgers, by the way.

**By Dick Seamons**
English Nature's Enquiry Service

## Corncrake recovery

Andy Hay/rspb-images.com

Congratulations are in order for the successful breeding of the first clutch of corncrake chicks – due to be reintroduced to the English countryside later this year.

The chicks are the first of approximately 12 clutches due this summer and are the result of the successful Corncrake Project – a Species Recovery Programme initiative involving English Nature, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Corncrakes are migratory birds that travel from Africa to breed in Britain. The birds are rarely seen in the wild as they live, camouflaged by their brown feathers, in clumps of plants such as grasses and nettles.

The breeding programme is being run at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park, where the corncrakes have secluded aviaries, replicating their natural habitat, in which to breed and hatch their eggs. Once hatched, the chicks leave the mother after approximately 10 days. The first clutch, which are currently sporting black downy plumage, will get their chestnut brown adult feathers around 35 days.

English Nature has been working to establish and manage a suitable habitat, on part of an internationally protected wildlife site, into which the birds will be released.

The RSPB is also currently carrying out a survey to try and calculate how many corncrakes there are in England.

## Branching Out: Elm Map

For centuries the countryside has seen dramatic changes in biodiversity. Take the elm – Britain has lost more than 20 million elms to disease since the mid-1970s. The mature elms still surviving support a unique community of wildlife, from lichens and mosses to beetles and butterflies. In an initiative to raise awareness of these important trees, the English Nature/Natural History Museum Partnership is joining forces with the Ramblers' Association to carry out a survey to map mature surviving elms.

Jill Butler/Ancient Tree Forum

The Ramblers' Association, which boasts 140,000 members, will be hosting Elm Map walks during their 'welcome to walking week' (20-28 September) when walk leaders will be asked to record details of mature surviving elms seen during their walk. Information packs with identification guides and a simple recording card will be provided to each group. Fact sheets will highlight the importance of elms as habitats for some of the country's most rare and threatened species, such as the orange-fruited elm lichen and the white-spotted pinion moth.

Partners in this project include the Ancient Tree Forum, the British Bryological Society and the British Lichen Society. Information captured during the walks will contribute to a national register of ancient trees being developed by the Ancient Tree Forum, the Woodland Trust and the Tree Register.

For more information visit:
www.ramblers.org.uk/elms
www.ancient-tree.org.uk

## Moss rustling at Hankley Common

Following a report of an attempted theft of moss from Ministry of Defence Land at Hankley Common in Surrey, English Nature contacted Defence Estates.

A van was discovered with approximately 60 bags of moss, but the two suspects, who were seen in the distance carrying sacks, escaped across the common.

Hankley Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is important for its wet and dry heathland habitats and represents some of the finest remaining heathland on the Lower Greens and in Southern England. Mosses are an important component of the heathland flora and their collection is potentially damaging to the special interest of the site.

The removal of moss or any other wild plant without a landowner's permission is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. In the case of Hankley Common this could, in addition, constitute the offence of third party damage to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which carries a fine of up to £20,000.

The moss is likely to have been destined for the hanging basket market and would possibly have been sold to local garden centres. Similar incidents have occurred on other sites in the area including one case two years ago of moss stolen from Thursley National Nature Reserve.

English Nature is keen to raise awareness of this problem locally and appeal to the public, florists and garden centres to check that moss used in wreaths and hanging baskets is legally collected and comes from sustainable sources.

## Caught on camera

I Carter/English Nature

The red kite is one of England's most stunning birds of prey. By the end of the 1800s they were nearly all wiped out.

In 2001 and 2002, a webcam was sited at a red kite nest in England, as part of the 'Red Kites @ Rockingham' project organised by English Nature, RSPB and Forest Enterprise.

The project is running again during 2003 and visitors to the information centre at Top Lodge, Northamptonshire, can view the stunning video pictures of the red kite pair and their three chicks. Alternatively, you can view the camera by visiting www.english-nature.co.uk/redkite/default.asp

For information contact the 'Red Kites @ Rockingham' information centre on 01780 444098.

## Now is the time for… summer insects

Continuing in our expert series, this month David Sheppard looks at multitudes of buzzing things...

Roger Key/English Nature

Moon hoverfly *Metasyrphus luniger*

Walk outside anywhere in July and there will be lots and lots of insects moving around. Their activities may look aimless, but everything they are doing is for a purpose. Most will be adult for only a fortnight and there is a lot to pack into this brief spell of adulthood.

Some insects may be just sitting around on leaves and doing absolutely nothing. Don't be fooled, they are busy raising their body temperature. Remember, these animals are cold blooded and rely on the sun to provide them with warmth for muscles to move, nerves to respond, guts to digest, eggs to mature, etc. Basking is a vital, and dangerous, part of life.

Being out in the sun means that predators can see them, so they have to be continually alert. Of course, they could be predators themselves and are sitting still waiting for a suitable prey item to pass by, so that they can dart out and catch it. Some more active hunters can be seen running up and down stems and leaves seeking out their next meal. Of course, they don't always eat the food they catch. For some it is a means of attracting a mate and keeping her distracted for just long enough…. the insect version of a box of chocolates, but one that is fresh, nourishing and doesn't melt in the sun.
There is so much to do on a sunny day in July.

**David Sheppard**

## A short history of a big idea

John Ross

Sustainable development is a concept with the ability to elude definition. A former director of Friends of the Earth, Special Adviser to successive Secretaries of State for the Environment and, most recently, Strategic Adviser to Rio Tinto and BP, English Nature Council Member, Tom Burke is well placed to take up the challenge.

"I have no problem at all with the 'Brundtland' definition: 'development which meets the needs of today's people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This seems to me to capture the concept very well and to present a clear and operational challenge to us all.

"The emergent debate since the middle of the last century is over how we incorporate into public policy the need to maintain the environmental conditions for economic development. If we do not invest a significant proportion of the benefits of economic development (knowledge, capital, technology, institutional capacity) in maintaining those conditions we will not be able to go on developing. Meeting that challenge is what requires us to make a transition to sustainable development.

"The operational challenge of sustainable development is to raise the real incomes of some eight billion people without collapsing the ecological foundations of the economy. Those foundations are the six biogeophysical systems on which our economy depends for everything in it that is not supplied by fossil fuels and non-fossil minerals: croplands, rangelands, forestlands, freshwaters, oceans and the atmosphere.

"Degrade the productivity of those six systems and you ultimately degrade the productivity of the economy. This makes the maintenance of a healthy biodiversity central to the future strength of the global economy and wellbeing of the world's population."

Phoenix



Phoenix

# Towards a sustainable future

Balancing the growing demands of modern living with the need for a clean, healthy and sustainable environment has never been more important. And there are signs that it is being done successfully.

## Town & Country

House building? Conservation? The two have traditionally been seen as mutually exclusive. Yet there is firm proof that they can be combined and managed sustainably.

Where once were rural fields, there now exists Cambourne: a thriving market town in Cambridgeshire of over 1,000 residential properties. You would expect this to have been another case of planners' gain at the cost of wildlife-rich countryside. But, Cambourne is a good example of how the principles of sustainable development, if properly applied, can find solutions to planning issues that meet our social and economic needs at the same time as being kind to wildlife.

In 1992 those fields were large, featureless and intensively farmed. At the same time, South Cambridgeshire District Council had identified the need for 3,000 new homes.

The fields came up for sale and an intriguing idea was hatched: a small, self-contained town that could meet all of the Council's housing needs and be developed sustainably.

After the discovery of three badger setts and a colony of great crested newts, Anne Goodal of environmental consultancy Ecological Services Ltd was brought in to advise.

"I always tell developers that if they get us in at the start of a project, we can ensure that conservation is part of the plan, not part of the problem," she said.

Armed with a copy of the building schedule and current data on local wildlife, Anne set about ensuring that the programme of work was undertaken in sympathy with the environment.

"We've never had a problem getting the developers to understand how a bit of extra planning can have massive benefits for local wildlife," Anne adds. "After all, they're tied to the success of the development as a place where people want to come and live."

Monthly meetings, a contractor's list of conservation dos and don'ts and an ecological assessment of each plot prior to work have been key parts of the communication process.

"Cambourne has been a very important project for us," said Colm Crowley, Project Manager for Bryant Homes. "As a developer, it has been refreshing to work so closely with conservation organisations and at such an early stage. Conservation became an integral part of the planning rather than something to be viewed as a problem further down the line. I think that there are definitely lessons to be learnt for the future."

The role of English Nature has been largely to advise and support Anne. "Our focus is on bringing people and wildlife together and, in this respect, Cambourne is ahead of the game," added David Denman, Conservation Officer with English Nature's Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire team. "For example, an ecological centre sits within the heart of town and schools are located near to an 'ecopark' with its pocket habitats typical of the area – woodland, new grassland and open water.

"The biggest test, however, has to be biodiversity gain and there is clear proof of that at Cambourne," continued David.

The woodland and other semi-natural areas, linked by a network of small, hedged fields, have already attracted three species of bat and have doubled the numbers of breeding birds. Meanwhile, muddy margins of the new lakes have lured snipe, dunlin and ringed plovers to feed.

### Sustainable development – key message

Cambourne exemplifies how partnerships between developers and ecologists can help meet our housing needs and nature conservation objectives whilst improving the quality of life of current and future residents.

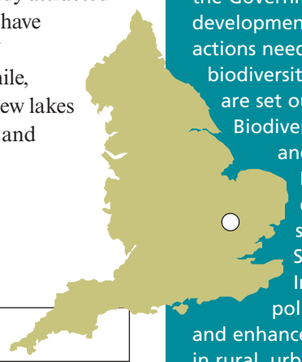


Phoenix

### The role of English Nature in sustainable development

We depend on our environment for clean air, water, fuel, food, medicines, scientific knowledge and open greenspace – all those things essential to our wellbeing. Yet the natural environment and biodiversity can only deliver these benefits if used and managed sustainably. Maintaining economic growth and social progress without eroding the natural environment is a major challenge.

English Nature has a key role in helping the Government meet its sustainable development aims. The targets and actions needed to protect and manage biodiversity, as a sustainable resource, are set out in the Government's Biodiversity Strategy for England and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, which we help to deliver. We designate and support the management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), promote policies and practices to protect and enhance biodiversity and geology in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas. Our wider work includes partnerships to involve people with their natural environment and area-based initiatives to support local and regional economies.



ABP's port at Immingham is the UK's largest for handling tonnage

ABP

With as much as 90 per cent of all imported goods entering the UK by way of ports, there is intense pressure to develop these sites. Yet such growth can be achieved while still meeting nature conservation objectives if port authorities and bodies such as English Nature work closely together from the start.

# Safe port of call

## The Habitats Regulations: key to a sustainable future for ports

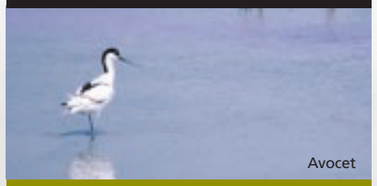
When Harwich Haven Authority sought permission to deepen and widen the navigation channel to the Port of Felixstowe in 1998, a number of harmful impacts on estuary wildlife were identified. This included reductions in the sediment supply that feeds the mudflats, and of the area of mud exposed at low tide. In order to comply with the Habitats Regulations, a sustainable solution was needed and the Authority suggested a pioneering programme of 'sediment feeding' – balancing the impact on sediment supply by introducing dredged material into the estuary. In addition, the Authority secured a 16-hectare site at Trimley and engineered it to provide new intertidal mudflats. This site is now sufficiently well visited by migratory waterfowl that it has recently been designated a SSSI and an extension to the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area.

Background image: ABP

British ports evolved from a time when safe anchorages were in sheltered locations, often in estuaries. Such places are among our most important wildlife resource, accommodating phenomenal numbers of migratory wildfowl, and the majority of our saltmarsh and mudflat. They also provide breeding and feeding areas for a wide range of fish and the migration route for others. Yet estuaries are also desirable places to live and work. It is inevitable that there will be conflict between economic demands, social needs and the environment as expansion of the global market leads to massive growth in business for the ports and increasing pressure for new capacity.

As vessel traffic has increased in frequency – and size – many of our major estuaries have been progressively deepened. However, it wasn't until the introduction of the Habitats Regulations in 1994, and the proposed designation of Special Areas of Conservation, that there has been proper evaluation of the impacts of such developments.

## Estuaries – an important wildlife resource



I Carter/English Nature

Avocet

Mudflats and saltmarshes provide an important environment for waterfowl, especially winter migrants, but there are some, such as avocet, that breed in numbers close to possible major port developments. All have slightly different feeding habits and behavioural traits. For example, dunlin will follow the tide as it recedes, others such as black-tailed godwit will gather on particular pieces of foreshore. Depending upon their prey, these birds will occur at different locations within an estuary. For example, ringed plovers favour sandier areas at the mouth of an estuary, whereas shelduck prefer sloppy mud further upstream that supports the *Hydrobia* snails upon which they feed.

"If it cannot be demonstrated that a planned development will not have an adverse effect on the designated site, it can only proceed on the grounds of human health and safety or if there is an overriding public interest," said English Nature's Head of Estuaries Conservation, Roger Morris.

"If there is consent on grounds of overriding public interest, there must be sufficient measures to compensate and ensure that the Natura 2000 network remains intact," he added.

"Our approach to new port development has been to encourage best use of existing resources and, typically, that means using the existing space more effectively.

"Where this is not possible, we have encouraged ports to concentrate on securing environmental outcomes that honestly reflect impacts and deliver adequate offsetting measures."

In the case of ABP, the country's biggest port operator, the approach to new developments has been taken a step further. ABP has entered into a formal agreement with English Nature to ensure that habitats are not only protected, but also created. ABP has put forward proposals for positive habitat creation for its planned developments at Hull, Immingham and Ipswich.

"We recognise that many of our ports are in or near sites of international conservation importance," said Peter Barham, Environment Manager at ABP. "As such, it is a primary objective of our company to operate and grow in ways that contribute to sustainable development.

"Much of that is about building strong partnerships from the start and recognising that sustainable development is one of ABP's primary objectives in running and developing its ports. Our relationship with English Nature, for example, is based on trust and a shared understanding of what impacts development may have. We can then use that to ensure that adequate mitigation measures are introduced."

This message is underlined by the fact that the company owns a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and recently published a report on its corporate social responsibilities, outlining in great detail its approach to environmental management and sustainable development.

"We recognise that building an outer harbour at Immingham could have an adverse impact on mudflats there. We are, therefore, seeking to create around 65 hectares of intertidal habitat. But we're not just estuary 'gardening', we want to contribute to the long-term future of the estuary."

Peter Barham, Environment Manager, Associated British Ports

## Sustainable development – key points

The Habitats Regulations help to ensure that we take account of the Government's guiding principles for sustainable development, including:

- Respecting environmental limits to avoid irreversible damage to ecosystems.
- The application of the precautionary principle – lack of full scientific knowledge is not enough to postpone cost effective measures to prevent environmental damage.
- Taking a long-term perspective by limiting our resource use and minimising environmental damage.
- Using scientific knowledge to evaluate the 'adverse impact' of a development.

In addition, the relationship between English Nature and Port Authorities shows how partnership working can maintain economic growth and social progress without damaging the natural environment and depleting natural resources.

Background image: ABP

Flower-rich grasslands are among our most treasured habitats. They have suffered huge losses over the last 50 years and action plans for their maintenance, restoration and re-creation are now being implemented under the Government's UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

# Reaping the rewards


Wildlife Sites Project

*Devil's bit scabious*

English Nature is the lead partner for two of the National BAP grassland Habitat Action Plans, lowland calcareous grassland and lowland acid grassland. England also has significant areas of lowland and upland meadows purple moor, grass and rush pastures, and we are working closely with partners to implement action plans for these grassland types.

Over the last few years, English Nature has helped fund a range of projects and initiatives set up to achieve the grassland action plan targets.

A range of projects are under way, from the production of management handbooks and promotional information, to practical grassland restoration. In some cases, projects will also benefit BAP priority species, such as juniper and the chalk carpet moth.

Practical projects usually involve local partnerships including organisations such as Local Wildlife Trusts, Local Planning Authorities and the UK Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). A number of projects are using funding to put together applications to seek support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

You can read about some of these projects in this feature, but there are many others which aim to maintain, restore or re-create flower-rich grasslands. These include those to restore chalk and limestone grasslands in Dorset, Kent, Surrey and Gloucestershire.




Malcolm Emery

A view of Deep Dean in Wilmington Downs SSSI, part of the South Downs Lifescape Project


Paul Glendell/English Nature

Green winged orchid


Peter Wakely/English Nature


Peter Wakely/English Nature

Cowslip *Primula veris,* one of the more colourful species benefiting from grassland conservation in Somerset

## Somerset Wildlife Sites Project

There are some 2,000 County Wildlife Sites in Somerset of county importance for wildlife. Unlike Sites of Special Scientific Interest, they have no statutory designation and, as a result, landowners, tenants and managers are not always encouraged to actively conserve them.

In 1991 the Somerset Wildlife Trust initiated the Wildlife Sites Project to tackle this problem – aiming to raise the awareness of landowners, tenants and managers of the importance of the sites they manage.

Somerset County Council administers a system of small capital grants with the support of English Nature and local authorities. These contribute towards the cost of providing secure stock fencing, water supplies and the clearing of invading scrub.

"When grant support is available, owners realise that they have something important and are more likely to manage their grassland well," said Wildlife Sites Liaison Officer, Peter Beeden.

For more information contact Peter Beeden on 01823 355141.


Paul Glendell/English Nature

The early spider orchid *Ophrys sphegodes,* one of the many species that could benefit in the South Downs

## South Downs Lifescapes project

"In the South Downs there is a high proportion of intensive agriculture and little semi-natural vegetation – unimproved chalk grassland now remaining extends to less than three per cent of the total area," said Roger Matthews from English Nature's Sussex and Surrey Team. "There is therefore a lot of potential to restore calcareous grassland – supporting a wide variety of grasses, herbs, mosses, lichens, birds and insects – on a landscape scale."

English Nature's Lifescapes project is a national pilot scheme, comprising four pilot areas. The South Downs pilot project works along side the Sussex Downs Conservation Board's Landscape Enhancement Initiative. Other partners include the East Hampshire AONB, Defra, the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Countryside Agency, the Biodiversity Record Centres for Sussex and Hampshire and the School of the Environment at the University of Brighton.

### The key aims of the project are to:

- assist land managers, planners, advisers, and other stakeholders in the understanding of environmental constraints and opportunities affecting land management decisions; and
- help plan and target resources for land management and habitat restoration/recreation on the South Downs.

However, before embarking on restoration plans for something as complex as the landscape they are developing a 'vision mapping' tool. Vision mapping uses Geographical Information System-based analysis to create a computerised vision of the existing landscape, with which models of future landscape scenarios can be constructed, based on different specified options.

For more information contact Roger Matthews/Malcolm Emery on 01273 476595.

The harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* (with the blue bell-shaped flowers) can now be found on Southern Magnesian limestone grassland in the Leeds area

## Southern Magnesian Limestone Grassland Project

Unimproved Magnesian limestone grassland is nationally scarce in England, with only a few hundred hectares remaining nationwide. Within the Leeds area, there are around 43 hectares of semi-improved Magnesian limestone grassland spread between 15 sites – 12 of which are of less than three hectares.

The Southern Magnesian Limestone Grassland Project is mainly concerned with restoring these grassland habitats around Leeds. Since 2001, both English Nature and Leeds City Council have been working together to extend and restore these small and isolated grassland areas.

One of key initiatives in this project has been the creation of a seed bank and subsequent seed harvesting. Seed is collected from existing SSSI sites in the area and used to restore limestone grassland areas in fields adjacent to the SSSIs – ultimately extending, and creating a valuable addition to the SSSIs.

For more information contact Tim Kohler on 01924 334500.

# Doing that little bit extra

The SSSI awards reward those owner/occupiers prepared to do that little bit extra to encourage wildlife and bring nature to people. This year 19 awards were made.

Dave Webb, Conservation Officer for Derbyshire Caving Association

Derbyshire Caving Association

The awards were first presented in the summer of 1995 by the Earl of Cranbrook (Lord Cranbrook), then chair of English Nature. Eight awards were created, each focused on good management of grasslands in counties close to the Stoneleigh showground. Since then, the base for awards has widened. This year's categories included people and wildlife, Biodiversity Action Plan achievements, habitat management, habitat restoration, habitat creation and monitoring and surveying.

The awards reward those people who are working with English Nature to meet the Government's Public Service Agreement.

## Dave Webb, Cave Conservation Monitoring project in the Peak District and Derbyshire

Dave Webb is the Conservation Officer for Derbyshire Caving Association (DCA). Dave is one of a group of cavers (including Ann Soulsby, Wayne Sheldon, Jim Thompson, John Taylor, Pete Wagstaff, Iain Barker, John Barnatt, and Brian Edmonds) who perform ongoing monitoring of cave SSSIs during their usual trips to the cave systems. He has co-ordinated the whole project within DCA, and has worked closely with English Nature staff to design monitoring forms, co-ordinate cavers and generally help run the project.

"Dave has voluntarily put considerable amounts of his time into this project. His enthusiasm, expertise and genuine interest and dedication to cave conservation have enabled this local team to achieve a difficult target. We now expect to be able to build on the monitoring and develop a programme of cave conservation measures," said Audra Hurst from the Peak District and Derbyshire Team.

"I can't begin to tell you how thrilled I am that I have been given this recognition. However it's not over yet and there's still work to do – but I think we can feel justifiably proud of what has been achieved so far, " said Dave.

Paul Glendell/English Nature

David Nichols, Secretary and Peter Pedley, Treasurer of Lytham and District Wildfowlers

## Lytham and District Wildfowlers Association, Warton Marsh SSSI (part of Ribble Estuary)

Warton Marsh is owned and managed by the Lytham and District Wildfowlers Association. This land is an important part of the Ribble Estuary SSSI, Special Protection Area (SPA) and National Nature Reserve. Under the guidance of the English Nature NNR management plan, the club manages the cattle grazing and maintains open water splashes ready to receive the wintering wildfowl and wading birds.

Many people may be surprised to think that managing a site which is internationally important for birds while also allowing shooting is contradictory. However, sustainable wildfowling has been successfully achieved by the club through designated sanctuary areas, restricted shooting times and careful monitoring.

The club has managed the site well over many years and, as a result, both coastal habitats and bird populations are benefiting, and the area of SSSI under its control has achieved favourable condition.

"It was a real surprise to hear we had won the award", said Dave Nichols, Secretary of the Lytham and District Wildfowlers Association. "It is nice to know that we are being appreciated for what we are doing. Most of the wildfowlers are conservationists at heart and it is important to keep the site in a positive condition for future generations."

## Mr and Mrs Dickins, Flamborough Head SSSI

The Dickins family have lived on this SSSI for more than 13 years. The site is in favourable condition and the land is not managed, allowing active cliff processes such as erosion and slumping to continue to happen.

In 2002, a plesiosaur fossil (a 132 million year old marine reptile) was discovered on their land and the family, particularly the grandchildren, were actively involved in the excavation led by the Dinosaur Coast project.

The site is a regular haven for geologists, fossil hunters and the public, with universities regularly holding geological weekends.

"I am amazed at winning the award," said Mrs Judy Dickins. "However, the site does all the hard work. It is naturally rich in rare wild-flowers and of course there are the fossils. "

Kimmo Evans, Maritime Protected Areas Officer said, "English Nature advocates the need to work with natural processes on the coast wherever possible. Allowing cliff processes to work and not be interfered with by hard sea defences allows fantastic findings of dinosaurs, like at Flamborough Head SSSI, to take place. It is then with the co-operation of landowners and managers, in this case SSSI Award winners Mr and Mrs Dickins, that these treasures can then be saved for future generations to appreciate."

Paul Glendell/English Nature

Back row: Claire & Jo Baker, Judy and Bob Dickens. Front: Sam Baker, Billy Kay, Tom Baker From Millhouse Field Farm photographed at Flamborough Head.

Paul Glendell/English Nature

Richard Dyer, SSSI owner at Braunton Swanpool, with his father-in-law, Alistair Evans, who did all the work on the SSSI

## Richard Dyer, Braunton Swanpool SSSI

Braunton Swanpool SSSI is important for its reedbeds and marshy grasslands, supporting plants such as southern marsh orchid and ragged robin and wetland birds like the reed bunting and grasshopper warbler.

Richard Dyer grazes traditional South Devon cattle extensively across the site, to produce a flower-rich, tussocky sward and to check scrub encroachment. English Nature supports this management with a Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) agreement, including an annual payment under the Traditional Breed Incentive. Mr Dyer also has a Countryside Stewardship Scheme agreement on the rest of his farm and is encouraging rare species, like the grey partridge and greater horseshoe bats, into the wider landscape.

Richard Dyer said, "I am delighted to win this award. I would like to thank everyone for helping to make a positive contribution to wildlife in the area. My father-in-law [Alistair Evans] has been particularly active with the scrub clearance – he has spent a lot of time on the site with a chainsaw in his hands."

## Key messages

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are the best sites for wildlife and geology and over half of the SSSIs in England are important internationally for wildlife.
2. Nearly 60 per cent of SSSIs are in a favourable or recovering condition.
3. The Government's Public Service Agreement (PSA) is to get 95 per cent of England's SSSIs by area into favourable or recovering condition by 2010.
4. In the last year we have completed our assessment of the condition of the SSSIs in England. Some sites are already in favourable condition and others are unfavourable, but are recovering well. For these sites we need to continue with the management that is in place.
5. There are many reasons why a SSSI might be in unfavourable condition and on many sites there is more than one problem to solve. Some of the major problems are over-grazing in the upland areas, under-grazing in the lowlands, coastal erosion, freshwater drainage and poor water quality.
6. English Nature wishes to work in partnership with SSSI owners and managers for the wildlife and natural features on these special sites.
7. SSSIs are not enough on their own – action is needed in the rest of the countryside to maintain the biological and geological diversity.

# Doing that little bit extra


David Whitehorne from the Malvern Hills Conservators

## The other SSSI award winners

### The Murray Downland Trust, Heyshott Down SSSI
The Murray Downland Trust and its founders were involved in this site long before it was designated as a SSSI. They saved this very species-rich site from being lost to scrub and woodland. Since then the Trust has gradually brought more of the site back into appropriate management and favourable condition – the work carried out relies heavily on volunteers.

### Mr Gerry Peters, Dernford Fen SSSI
Gerry was significantly involved in successfully returning a substantial part of the site, which was dense scrub, to herb-rich fen and grassland in 1983/84. He has since maintained an annual summer cutting and raking regime to maintain these important plant communities.

### Mike and John Howes, Tarn Hows SSSI
The Howes not only maintain the basin mire habitat within the SSSI, but also manage the 36 hectares of land to a comparable standard outside it and have produced a 20-year management plan aimed at maintaining and enhancing the nature conservation interest of the SSSI.

### Trustees and Managers of the Edmonsham Estate, Moors River System SSSI
Much of the SSSI land has achieved, or is close to achieving, favourable condition through a commitment given to nature conservation in changing land uses and restructuring agricultural enterprise.

### Mr D Attwood, Wouldham to Detling Escarpment SSSI
The site was unmanaged previously and suffered from numerous problems associated with neglect. Mr Attwood has put in a lot of effort, not only to manage the site, but also clean it up and promote public access and enjoyment.

### Mr Robin Haddy, Minster Church SSSI and Boscastle to Widemouth SSSI
Mr Haddy delivered the desired management on the SSSI and also wildlife-friendly management in the wider environment beyond the SSSI boundary.

### Holme Pit Action Group, Holme Pit SSSI
The group has undertaken habitat management work, provided information to the public via a website specifically dedicated to the SSSI (www.holmepit-sssi.org.uk) and encouraged community involvement by work parties and events.

### Messrs Ron Lamb and Michael Bates, South Thames Estuary and Marshes SSSI
The land owned by Messrs Lamb and Bates within the SSSI is in favourable condition and has been enhanced by ditch restoration and re-profiling and sensitive control of water levels.

### Mr H Morphet, Ingleborough SSSI
Mr Morphet has enthusiastically embraced the opportunities for wildlife enhancement on his land holding within and outside the SSSI. His example is a useful demonstration to neighbours that farming and wildlife management can be integrated.

### Richard Chapman, South Hylton Pasture SSSI
Mr Chapman has managed the habitats on his SSSI for the past 20 years and has ensured that the SSSI's notable features are maintained and meeting the requirements under the Management Agreement with English Nature.

### Messrs David and John Banwell, Tealham and Tadham Moors SSSI
Both David and John manage in excess of 35 hectares of wetland habitats. They have demonstrated how fields can be successfully managed for multiple wildlife objectives.

### Mr and Mrs G King, The Gardens SSSI
Unimproved species-rich grassland is very rare in Suffolk. The winners have been developing a novel approach to collecting seed with the potential to create new grassland. Extensive rabbit exclusion has also been carried out on the site.

### Dr Barry Yates, Rye Harbour SSSI
The parts of the SSSI under Barry's management are in admirable condition and improved beyond its notification state. This is an exceptionally well-managed reserve with coastal shingle and wetland habitats.

### Wokingham Unitary Authority Countryside Service, Longmoor Bog SSSI
The parts of the site that the winners manage are in favourable or 'recovering' condition. They have put in considerable resources, both financial and staff time, in restoring the habitats within the SSSI.

## The Malvern Hills Conservators, Castlemorton Common SSSI and The Malvern Hills SSSI

The Malvern Hills and commons are important grassland sites supporting a range of grassland communities. The two SSSIs are part of a much larger semi-natural grassland area, of which the Malvern Hills Conservators owns about 1,215 hectares.

The Malvern Hills are a famous landmark in the West Midlands, attracting over one million visitors a year. The huge visitor pressure, and especially the presence of many dogs, led in the early 1990s to the last active commoners removing stock from the hills. The result was a rapid decline in the quality of the open grassland habitats, with scrub, bracken and bramble spreading up the hills.

Working with English Nature, the Conservators have started to restore grazing to the hills. They have employed a shepherd, and bought their own hardy sheep (Cheviots and Hebrideans) to graze part of the hill.

These actions have helped the SSSIs, especially Malvern Hills, move towards favourable condition.

"We are extremely proud to have been given this award," said David Whitehorne, from the Malvern Hills Conservators. "It is extremely satisfying to see the features of the management plan come to fruition and to be recognised for our achievement. I feel incredibly privileged to be involved in the management of such a well-loved and respected landscape."

The Conservators are also part of a wider partnership that has been given Heritage Lottery Funding to put in cattle grids to secure the boundaries of the Hills. Commoners will be more prepared to restore grazing, both because of the presence of the shepherd, and because the stock will not be able to wander.

The Conservators are considering using a llama to protect the sheep from uncontrolled dogs – something that has never been tried on open commonland before.



# Obituaries

April brought some sad news about two influential wildlife advocates who made major contributions to furthering the work of English Nature and its predecessors.

## Max Nicholson CB CVO 1904–2003

This pioneering conservationist was instrumental in setting up English Nature. He died on 26 April, aged 98.

Max Nicholson was Director-General of the Nature Conservancy Council (as it was then called) during its formative years, between 1952 until 1966, establishing the first nature reserves and helping to set up a network of legally protected wildlife sites – Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). He also helped create the World Wildlife Fund in 1961. Prior to this, he had a formidable career in public service, heading Herbert Morrison's office during the 1945-51 Labour Government.

Max was a distinguished ornithologist. He wrote books on birds, conducted censuses, developed counting techniques and worked on bird ecology. In 1932 he created the British Trust for Ornithology and in 1938 helped found the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology. He did not lose his power of observation with age. In 2000, at 96, he drew attention to the decline of sparrows in south-east England, which led to a government grant for research.

English Nature Chief Executive, Andy Brown said, "Max's achievements are truly remarkable. Virtually single-handed he constructed the framework for nature conservation in this country, which has served us well for over 50 years. His legacy is considerable and more than one might expect from one man. One of his greatest contributions was to ensure that wildlife was not a loser in the huge effort to rebuild Britain after the Second World War and we all see the fruits of his work in the network of protected sites today and the continuing partnerships between voluntary organisations and the state."

## James Teacher 1937–2003

The President of the Kent Wildlife Trust and Vice-President of Plantlife, James Teacher died in London on 23 April, aged 65.

James was recognised as an expert in botany, ornithology, forestry and wildlife, serving on the councils of some of the top conservation organisations of England, including English Nature and the RSPB. He also won professional recognition for the regeneration work he carried out, both on the family farm at Somerhill in Kent and the Fealar Estate in Perthshire, which he part-owned.

It was on the farm that he discovered a passion for land management, and over the next 20 years achieved great successes in conservation, both at Somerhill and Fealar. At Somerhill, he nurtured a colony of silver-washed fritillary butterflies – the only one in Kent – helped to regenerate the heathland, and became a key player in the Medway Otter Project; in 1994 he won the Forestry Authority's award of excellence. At Fealar, he introduced two innovative projects – the regeneration of native woodland and the restoration of cut-over peat bogs.

English Nature Chief Executive, Andy Brown said, "James made a tremendous contribution to conservation in a number of ways. His work on the Council of English Nature and our predecessor, NCC, was invaluable, based as it was on his own experience and knowledge of managing different habitats. Most missed will be his remarkable enthusiasm for nature conservation and his ability to inspire and encourage others."

# WHAT'S ON? GUIDE

## JULY

**JUL 29-31 — New Forest Show**
New Forest Showground, near Brokenhurst, Hampshire
**Contact: William McKenzie 023 8028 6425**

**JUL 29 — Chalkhill blue butterflies**
11am, Barton Hills NNR, Oxfordshire
**Contact: Rachel Dedman/Stephen Blow 01844 351833**

**JUL 30 — Mediaeval Lathkill Dale**
10am, Derbyshire Dales NNR, Derbyshire
**Contact: 01629 816640**

**JUL 30 — Walk on the wild side**
10am – 4pm, Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs NNR, Seaton, Devon
**Contact: Phil Page 01626 832330**

## AUGUST

**AUG 3 — Snakes alive! (and lizards too)**
9am, Wimborne, Dorset
**Contact: Derek Gane 01929 557450**

**AUG 10,17 AND SEP 7 — Walking with kites**
10am, Harewood House, Leeds, West Yorkshire
A series of walks will also be taking place at Eccup Reservoir.
**Contact (for both venues): Marie Bowness 0113 218 1040**

**AUG 17 — Sand dunes – just a pile of sand?**
2pm – 4pm, Saltfleetby – Theddlethorpe Dunes NNR, Rimac, Lincolnshire
**Contact: Roger Briggs 01507 338611**

**AUG 23 — Bats and moths on the Mosses evening**
9pm, Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR, Shropshire
**Contact: Joan Daniels 01948 880362**

**AUG 30 — An evening walk along the yew trail**
8pm – 10pm, Gait Burrows NNR, Lancashire
**Contact: Rob Petley-Jones 01539 531604**

## SEPTEMBER

**SEP 7 — Guided walk on Thorne Moor**
10.30am – 1.30pm, Humberhead Peatlands NNR, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire
**Contact: Darren Whitaker 01405 818819**

**SEP 14 — Gardening for wildlife**
2pm – 4pm, Castle Eden Dene NNR, Peterlee, Durham
**Contact: Mike Haigh 01915 860004**

For more information on these and other events, visit: www.english-nature.org.uk/events.asp

# Bringing biodiversity to the capital

**The London Biodiversity Partnership has been successful in promoting biodiversity in the region for more than five years, with over 60 organisations participating in 10 Habitat Action Plans and 12 Species Action Plans.**

The London Biodiversity Partnership was set up in 1996 to progress a London Biodiversity Action Plan. Since then the partnership – an informal alliance of public, private and voluntary organisations – has gone from strength to strength.

Professor David Goode, Chair of the London Biodiversity Partnership, said, "We have come a long way since the Partnership was first launched in 1996, and we now have a very strong base of support linked to the many Borough Biodiversity Partnerships".

2002 was a very active year for many of the species and habitat action plans with much of the Partnership's efforts focused on developing public awareness of the value of London's biodiversity.

English Nature-led action to encourage peregrine falcons – a spectacular bird of prey increasingly seen over the skies of London – has generated much interest and support from owners of high-rise buildings where the birds have begun to nest.

Metalanguage Design

The Black Redstart Action Plan, led by London Wildlife Trust, saw the launch of www.blackredstarts.org.uk, a key resource for developers, planners and ecologists. The website, supported by meetings with planners and developers, is promoting innovative landscape designs and features such as 'brown' roofs that provide suitable foraging habitats for black redstarts.

'Where have all the sparrows gone?', a survey co-ordinated by London Natural History Society, RSPB and London Wildlife Trust, received the largest ever public response to a wildlife survey in the capital, demonstrating Londoners' affection for the once numerous sparrow and providing a clear picture of its now restricted distribution throughout London.

The Partnership's future is also looking bright, with the project board now working towards preparing a business plan that will set the direction for the next five years. The intention is to give the Partnership a legal identity, adding value to the ongoing work of the members by providing: better co-ordination; the ability to tap into income streams not easily available to individual member organisations; and building the partnership by recruiting new members, particularly from sectors not usually associated with nature conservation projects.

Peter Massini, English Nature Conservation Officer, who sits on the project board said, "The Partnership has helped put biodiversity on the map in London by promoting and supporting some innovative initiatives for integrating biodiversity objectives with other agendas, resulting in commitment and support for nature conservation from individuals and organisations over and above the usual suspects".

More information is available from: www.lbp.org.uk

English Nature has been the lead partner in many Habitat and Species Action Plans in the London Biodiversity Partnership. Below are just some of these projects.

## Peregrine falcon

Andy Fisher

A peregrine falcon advice note has been produced and distributed via local authorities and direct to developers as required. The London Borough of Islington's Nature Conservation Team has installed a peregrine nest box in the Old Street area and there are plans to install a second one during 2003.

## Tower mustard

Plants grown at Kew Gardens from seed collected at Stain Hill Reservoir were planted in the Alder Beds and Rock Gardens in 2002. Further plants have been established at the Wetland Centre in Barnes.

## Heathland

Paul Glendell/English Nature

A second successful Heathland Forum was held in September 2002, hosted jointly by the London Borough of Wandsworth and the Wimbledon and Putney Common Conservators. A list of key heathland species was devised by the working group and circulated to all site managers. The list has been included within the working group's draft Heathland Restoration Strategy and has been used to identify priority sites for restoration works.