



Revealing the magic of nature

A better understanding can help people care

A helping hand

Volunteers play a crucial role in English Nature's work

A walk in the park

The *Wildspace!* grant scheme brings people and wildlife closer

Education, education...

How education officers in our National Nature Reserves can make a difference

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



Awarded for excellence

Cover picture



Cover photograph: Phoenix

Designed around the principles of sustainable development, Cambourne in Cambridgeshire has been developed with wildlife in mind as these schoolchildren are discovering.

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

brief update

Go wild in the garden



Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Judges from English Nature and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew selected Bob McMeekin's Railway Reclaimed entry (above) as the winner of Kew's Wild Ideas competition in July.

Bob's was one of six final year diploma students' showcase gardens in Kew's Go Wild 2003 summer festival.

The gardens were designed to give visitors ideas on how to use native plants and conserve wildlife in even the smallest plot.

Bob said, "The challenge of this garden has been in trying to recreate how nature reclaims a site. This has involved incorporating native, non-native and invasive plants."

English Nature judge, Chris Gibson said, "The Railway Reclaimed garden highlights how gardens and disused railways are important for nature in urban areas, both acting as important wildlife corridors."

Britain's first European Geopark

The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has clinched the title of Britain's first European Geopark. As reported in the last edition of the magazine, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust has also mounted a bid to bring the designation to its local area.

A UNESCO backed designation, European Geopark status is awarded to those areas with internationally important geological features and where significant efforts are being made to conserve and promote earth heritage.

"We hope that securing the Geopark designation will provide a spur to even greater efforts for geodiversity conservation and sustainable tourism and will help to raise the profile of the North Pennines AONB," says Chris Woodley-Stewart of the North Pennines AONB Partnership. The body comprises 27 local and national bodies including English Nature.

Brownfields for butterflies

Two leaflets highlighting the value of brownfield (urban and post-industrial) habitats as important refuges for many species of butterfly and moth have been published.

Brownfields for butterflies discusses the importance of these habitats for butterflies (as well as for moths and other invertebrates), while *Butterflies in towns and cities* lists species that can be found in urban habitats and gives practical land management advice. Both are published by Butterfly Conservation, in association with English Nature, Defra and Northumbrian Water.

Copies of these leaflets can be obtained by sending an A5 SAE (value 34p) to: Butterfly Conservation (leaflets), Manor Yard, East Lulworth, Dorset BH20 5QP.



Paul Pugh/Cel Creative

Sunny outlook for arable plants

Rare arable plants could enjoy a comeback thanks to changes in the way that payments will be made to farmers under the reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Once widespread on farmland, wildflowers such as the small alison, cornflower, shepherd's-needle and pheasant's-eye have declined because of modern agricultural methods. They now make up one fifth of the wild plants targeted for conservation action in the UK.

English Nature hopes that recent CAP changes will encourage farmers to leave field margins unsprayed and uncultivated as habitat for a range of wildlife.

"The projected increase in fallow land as a break in cropping could also enable arable plants to flourish," said English Nature Agricultural Policy Adviser, Gareth Morgan.

"Furthermore, set-aside rules could be changed to help these scarce species."

English Nature, in association with Wildguides, has just launched *Arable plants – a field guide* at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

The guide highlights the intensification of agriculture as a major cause of the decline of arable plants in the UK and presses for further efforts to conserve them. The guide intends to help people identify rarer

arable plants, and covers the origins and history of Britain's arable flora, the biology of arable plants and the management of arable land for flowers.



To order a copy, contact english-nature@twoten.press.net or telephone 0870 1214 177.

Council members wanted

The Minister for nature conservation and fisheries, Ben Bradshaw, wants to appoint two new members to the Council of English Nature from 1 April 2004.

Council is the organisation's governing body and consists of 13 members. Members are normally appointed for three years and receive £8,536 for 2.5 days per month. Successful applicants will understand the issues faced by English Nature and have a good track record of achievements in conservation and a knowledge of biodiversity issues.

Ideally, applicants should have either some marine or coastal experience, preferably in the areas of resource management and coastal planning; or landscape interests, preferably with experience of business in the rural environment. In addition, applications are particularly sought from the Midlands or north of England to ensure a country-wide spread of representation.

An information pack and application form is available from: Alison Burtenshaw, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, European Wildlife Division, Zone 1/06b, Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EB. Tel: 0117 372 8571, Fax: 0117 372 8642 email address: alison.burtenshaw@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Hill farmers honoured

Hill farmers from County Durham and Derbyshire are being honoured by the David Arnold-Forster Trust, for managing their farms in a successful and sustainable way.

The memorial trust, established to continue the work of David Arnold-Forster (the late Chief Executive of English Nature and a prominent environmentalist), presented the two Hill Farming Awards to:

Maurice and Kath Toward of Herdship Farm, Barnard Castle, County Durham.

Herdship Farm is a haven for black grouse, lapwing, yellow wagtail, redshank, snipe and golden plover. Maurice and Kath keep North Cheviot sheep as part of their breeding stock and plan to use traditional breeds of cattle for grazing in order to manage rushes and create conditions ideal for nesting lapwings; and

Robert and Sarah Helliwell of Upper Booth Farm, Edale, Derbyshire.

Upper Booth Farm is stocked with traditional Dale breeds: Swaledale and mule ewes and belted Galloway sucklers. Robert and Sarah have also diversified the business by introducing a campsite. With the help of the owners, the National Trust, they have turned the farm into an excellent example of how hill farming can be a sustainable and integral part of the local economy and community.

Both awards were sponsored by English Nature.

EDITORIAL

In this issue of English Nature, we discuss the challenge of connecting people with nature.

In England we have some of the most beautiful and best sites for wildlife anywhere, not only in National and Local Nature Reserves, but also in gardens, parks, even on railway embankments and roadside verges.

Yet most people have no real understanding or appreciation of the value of these places, where they are or what they represent. Unless we switch people on to the joy of nature, as Doug Hulyer argues on page 4, then our business of nature conservation is doomed.

Do we, then, have visitor centres everywhere, trails bristling with graphics and a sculpture at every turn, or do we hope the magic speaks for itself and do nothing? Is it our experiences of a place – late summer warmth in a favourite wood, the sound of a skylark over an empty moor – that turn us on and make us care, or is it knowing that only 198,000 hectares of ancient semi-natural woodland remain, or that between 1970 and 1998 skylark numbers have declined by 75 per cent?

We need both. If people are to act, to make decisions and choices that protect and enhance our environment, they need to both appreciate and understand it. If we can hit the right note, find the right balance between under- and over- selling nature, we will achieve more for a healthy future than any poet or politician.

Please get in touch with any comments, ideas or views.

Amanda Giles



Raising awareness of our natural heritage and why it should matter is a fundamental aspect of English Nature's work. And with 11 million people visiting England's 214 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) alone, it's a massive undertaking.

Sowing the seeds...

Connecting with people

Providing visitors with information about our nature reserves is one thing. Making it meaningful and interesting is quite another.

That's why English Nature places such an emphasis on 'interpretation' – ensuring that what visitors see and read in a nature reserve relates not only to their everyday experience, but also inspires them.

"We use many different methods to do this," said John Lincoln, NNR Communications Manager. "One is signage – we're currently re-signing NNRs so that they are consistent and provide more and better information. We're also developing virtual tours of NNRs on English Nature's website, the first of which is of Lathkill Dale in the Derbyshire Dales NNR.

"Many Area Teams also organise a variety of events and projects to encourage local people to visit National Nature Reserves. English Nature's *Wildspace!* grant scheme, funded through the New Opportunities Fund, also enables local partners to do the same on Local Nature Reserves (see pages 10 and 11).

Some reserves also have classroom facilities and are used by local schools and colleges or the general public. Guided walks and talks are often taken by a warden or education officer (see pages 5 to 7) or even by a local artist who will represent the reserve in artistic form.

People, place and pastiche, a too rich recipe?



Doug Hulyer

Most would agree that unless we engage and enthuse people with the wonder and joy of nature, then our business of nature conservation is doomed. Actively involved in environmental education since 1977, English Nature Council Member, Doug Hulyer has been one of those seeking to put people at the heart of conservation rather than on the outside of the 'select club'.

"We now have fantastic techniques for reaching people; from provocative exhibits and hands-on activity to great dramatic performance, storytelling, stunning sculpture and sound trails.

"But when is enough, enough? At what point in the quest to provide information and inspiration to a visiting public do our contrived interventions spoil the potentially life-changing experience that the 'sense-of-place' offers; the elusive switch that can turn knowledge and understanding into passion and belief. When does interpretation end and pastiche begin?

"In April 2003 I found myself in the middle of this discussion at English Nature's National Nature Reserve conference. Our NNRs probably have the greatest potential for those life-changing experiences of any tracts of English countryside. They are the best of the best, of unrivalled beauty and intricately layered. More by default than design, they are also one of the most under-interpreted resources within our national heritage. A concerted programme is needed to provide information and illumination to present and potential visitors.

"Beyond NNRs, we have gardens, parks, Local Nature Reserves, even railway embankments and roadside verges. Every town and city has countless corners where we have the opportunity to celebrate and illuminate nature.

"Compared with most nations, we've done a great job of protecting the best sites for wildlife in this country. Now is the time to reveal these sites and, through interpretation, start the real job of building the future rather than preserving the past."



Doug Gilbert



Doug Gilbert

English Nature has two education officers. Both are based at National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and both posts were established in the 1980s by the same site manager, who has since retired. Positive changes are on the way at each place. **Steve Berry** has been to Derbyshire and Durham to find out more.

Education, education, education

Lathkill Dale

There can't be many more delightful places in England to spend time than at Lathkill Dale on a sunny summer day. When I visited in July, the grasslands on the slopes were splashed with colour: I could pick out bright yellow rock-rose, the mauve of small scabious and dark purple thyme. It was the right time of year for the rare Jacob's-ladder, but I gather that this only occurs on the damper, north-facing slopes and not where we were. I was excited to get a glimpse of a redstart: not a common bird at all where I live in Sussex. Even the rocks looked interesting!

Carol Youngson, the part-time Education Officer based at the new area team office in Bakewell, was my guide as we walked along part of the route used by students during their day courses at Lathkill Dale. An entire day here sounds like unforgettable bliss and Carol explained that it is a principal aim to give the nine to 11 year olds an experience that will remain with them for life.

"If you only get through to a few children in a group of 30, and see their eyes almost literally light up, it's fantastically rewarding. In fact, almost all of the children who come here get a lot from their visit and there should be opportunities for more kids to spend time here or at other National Nature Reserves. It could change lives."

Most courses take place in the summer and aim to get the children to concentrate all their senses on the wildlife and natural features in the Dale. The one-day geology course takes advantage of children's fascination with fossils, which are easily found in the limestone. An excellent self-guided geology trail leaflet is now available. Other wildlife courses can be run on request. Professional conservationists, A-Level students and groups from universities are among those who come here to learn.

There is currently no educational centre at Lathkill Dale and all teaching must be done outdoors. In the English climate, this is usually a drawback and probably deters a good number of prospective pupils.

Education, education, education...

Peter Wakely/English Nature

The range of wildlife habitat from woodland to open slopes, not to mention geological features, are popular with the visiting children, students and other members of the public

“Monyash House Farm will be one of the National Trust’s demonstration areas, showing how sustainable farming can work. We have a great opportunity here to develop a centre that will be able to promote biodiversity, farming and conservation at all educational levels, from junior children through to university, not forgetting the general public.”

Carol Youngson, Education Officer, Lathkill Dale

Carol is delighted by a recent development at Monyash, a village at the western end of the Dale. Here, the National Trust – already a major landowner in the area – has acquired a large farm, with a number of disused buildings. One of these is to be converted into an interpretative and teaching centre which she hopes they may be able to share.

Some of Lathkill Dale’s woods have changed little over the last 8,000 years. Others helped to meet the timber needs of World War I and have since been carefully managed

Doug Gilbert

Castle Eden Dene

Steve Metcalfe has been the Education Officer at Castle Eden Dene for 12 years and he still loves the job. Over this period, generations of schoolchildren between the ages of three and 11, perhaps 30,000 altogether, have spent a day at ‘The Dene’. Almost all of them from local schools. They learn about map-reading, how flowers are pollinated, why and how birds migrate, what lives in ponds, how plants respond to light and much else. What’s more, the experience leaves a lasting impression.

The Dene is unique among English Nature NNRs in having a classroom. Teaching sessions are spent partly here and partly on the reserve itself, a magnificent, deep, steep-sided gorge, running down from the new town of Peterlee to the Durham coast. Its 210 hectares contain the largest area of natural woodland in north east England. Although more than 200 houses back on to the reserve, once you’re in the Dene itself, all thoughts of this urban setting quickly disappear. The various legends involving the Devil’s role in the placing of enormous stones in the river valley no longer seem quite as fanciful!

Steve, a native of Sunderland, is a natural communicator who gets respect from children because he treats them as equals.

“As far as possible, the kids are in charge. I divide them into teams and each is responsible – within obvious limits – for their actions.”

Peter Wakely/English Nature

Visiting the Peak District?

A self-guided trail to the formation and geology of Lathkill Dale. This easy-to-follow leaflet takes you through the dale, revealing the ancient secrets of the limestone and the leaflet is available from the Peak District & Derbyshire English Nature area team office at:

**Endcliffe,
Deepdale Business Park,
Ashford Rd,
Bakewell
Tel: 01629 816640**

Also available from local Tourist Information offices and youth hostels.

Although teaching is concentrated in the autumn and winter, Steve is relentlessly active at all other times, including evenings and weekends when he frequently works unpaid. A recent innovation is the construction of a giant pond behind the reserve centre. A raised platform running down one side can accommodate up to six children dipping for invertebrates and other mini-beasts. Next to it is a series of large picnic-style work tables, which have been laminated and covered with pictures of the plants, dragonflies and other creatures likely to be seen in and around the water.

Next to the pond is a wildlife garden, which has been put together largely by volunteers, who will also tend it. The plan is to offer this for the use of people in nearby sheltered accommodation or homes for the elderly, some of whom

may still be active enough to make a contribution. Others may just come for the peace and quiet or to watch the birds at the various feeders. The ‘Dene team’ – a group of local children who help out regularly on the reserve – have made their mark here, with willow weaving.

Steve’s formal title may be Education Officer, but his unofficial remit runs much wider than this. He works closely with the local authorities – Durham County Council, Easington District Council and Peterlee Town Council and also with the National Trust, which owns land on the coast – to involve all sections of the local community in the reserve.

This year there are no fewer than 14 community events, including a variety of spring walks, bat and moth evenings

“There has been a varied programme of events here since 1996. An encouraging 1,000 people turned up for the coastal event on 26 July.”

Peter Wakely/English Nature

Although over 200 houses back on to the reserve once inside you can well believe the myths and legends that surround the Dene

and days devoted to coastal heritage, green woodcraft and wildlife gardening. There are also events for the children including a mini-beast hunt, an evening Halloween walk and a ‘green Christmas’ day.

You can’t fail to be impressed by all this. It’s no surprise, then, when Steve talks about a successful bid recently made to the Heritage Lottery Fund – a £100,000 vote of confidence, to be spent on improving interpretative facilities and on the construction of new toilet blocks.

If Steve’s work at the Dene is proving a success, the question is, how many other NNRs could also benefit from this approach.

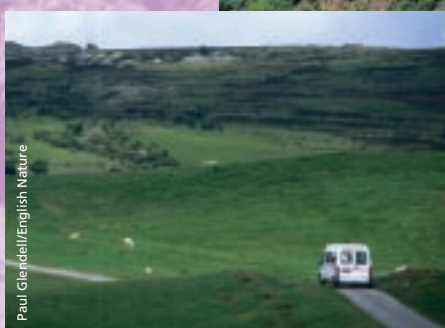
With dramatic scenery and a rich diversity of geology and wildlife, England's National Nature Reserves (NNRs) can allow visitors to learn first-hand the importance of our natural heritage. But access is the key.

Access all areas

For many people, particularly for those without a car, getting to these sites can be difficult. For others the problem may be about getting around the site. Irregular terrain makes hard, or in some cases impossible, work for the elderly, parents with young children in pushchairs and people with disabilities.

The Stiperstones NNR, situated in South Shropshire, is no exception. "The NNR, which lies within the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is home to the prominent Stiperstones ridge, which rises to 536 metres above sea level," said English Nature's Reserve Manager, Tom Wall. "Access to and around the site can be challenging."

In April 2002, English Nature joined a partnership with the Countryside Agency, Transport for Everyone in South Shropshire (TESS), the National Trust, Shropshire County Council and South Shropshire District Council, to provide access, by public transport, to the Shropshire Hills. The Shropshire Hills Shuttles (the Stiperstones Shuttle is one of these) provide links to and around The Stiperstones NNR and surrounding areas. A surfaced trail, suitable for those of all abilities, particularly the disabled and elderly, now allows visitors to enjoy part of the reserve. The trail starts at the main NNR Shuttle bus stop.



Stiperstones Shuttle

On 1 April 2002 the Stiperstones Shuttle made its inaugural journey – a circular 15-mile route around The Stiperstones NNR. The Shuttle allows visitors to reach the reserve at weekends – providing a service both to those without cars and those wishing to leave their cars at home. The bus route also stops at other amenities, including public houses, the Visitor Centre at Bog, and a variety of walks, such as the 'Stiperstones Stomp'.

An initial survey of the service found that approximately 1,250 visitors used the service in its first year – much more than was anticipated. "We passed the target that we had set ourselves for our third year of service," said Tom. "We are encouraged by the number of people we are attracting – the figures speak for themselves. But we are particularly keen to encourage more journeys by young people and families as they are currently infrequent users of the service."

"The whole of the Shuttle service and associated trails, have proved to be an enormous success. In the first two months of service in 2003, we have doubled the number of users across the network, compared to the same period in 2002."

TESS Project Officer,
Matt Johnson

However, providing access to the site is only the first step in getting visitors to interact with the landscape.

The Stiperstones NNR offers some of the most dramatic views and interesting wildlife and geology in Shropshire, so it is important that, once there, visitors can access this information in an easy, but exciting way.

The Bog Visitor Centre, which is one of the drop-off points of the Stiperstones Shuttle, provides visitors with a wealth of information about the local area – the site's geology, wildlife and conservation practices, as well as selling a selection of local produce and crafts. While using the bus service, visitors can quiz the driver about local myths, culture, wildlife and history. And for the kids? In the summer of 2002, a children's quiz with 20 questions about the reserve was introduced. The answers are found by going on the 'Stiperstones Stomp' (a five-mile path that runs along the ridge) and the Shuttle – a fun way of getting young people involved with the landscape.

For further information contact
Tom Wall, Reserve Manager,
on 01588 660618 or visit
www.shropshirehillsshuttles.co.uk



The All-ability Trail

The Stiperstones NNR runs an 'All-ability Trail', beginning in the main car park near the reserved parking spaces. This allows easy access for all visitors – especially the disabled or elderly.

Almost all of the 500 metres of the trail are flat and it follows a linear 'there-and-back' route. There are also resting places at intervals of less than 50 metres, where visitors can enjoy views of the heathland and the quartzite tors of The Stiperstones as well as looking across to the ridge of The Long Mynd.

This trail can be reached via The Long Mynd and Stiperstones Shuttle – part of the Shropshire Hills Shuttles.

Now is the time for... Michaelmas-daisies

Continuing our expert series, this month David Knight looks at an urban regular, the Michaelmas-daisy...



The Michaelmas-daisy is an important source of nectar for butterflies

The end of the summer is the time for asters. From July to October the bluish-mauve and yellow sea aster brings colour to our saltmarshes. But more familiar to most of us are the sea aster's American cousins, the Michaelmas-daisies.

Originally from the American prairies, Michaelmas-daisies were brought to Britain as garden plants about three hundred years ago and had escaped into the wild by the year 1800. Today they are found on roadsides, railways and riverbanks.

They are also commonly found on waste land in our towns and cities, sometimes called our urban commons. Here, these late-flowering plants provide an important source of nectar for insects, such as the red admiral and small tortoiseshell butterflies, honeybees and drone flies, when most other flowers are over. Blooming around Michaelmas, 29 September, they continue to flower through to November.

In America they are known by names such as the New York aster and the New England aster. Here, the different species of Michaelmas-daisy have crossed with each other, creating a mixture of types of different height and colour. So, besides the 'common' and 'narrow-leaved' Michaelmas-daisies, we also have the 'hairy', 'late' and 'confused'.

A walk in the park

“It’s about trying to find ways of getting different people to participate who wouldn’t normally think of coming to a nature reserve,” said Andrew Bedford, Ecology Manager for the London Borough of Islington. “At Gillespie Park LNR, for example, we’re always trying to find ways of connecting people with wildlife.”

At one level that may be a series of health walks with older Asian residents. At another, it may be an after-school gardening club or sparrow box project for local youth groups. “The spin-off is that we also get parents to experience the reserve when they come to pick the kids up.

“Having the *Wildspace!* grant has enabled us to do much of this sort of work,” he added. “With the funding we were able to employ Community Liaison Officer, Oliver Burke, and over the last year he has been able to increase community participation in the LNR and to raise awareness of the wildlife on people’s doorsteps.”

Much of that involves working with schools and youth groups. The team has developed a series of education packs linking the park to the National Curriculum and run themed days, such as the RSPB’s Big Garden Bird Watch. “We’re particularly interested in reaching disadvantaged youngsters. For example, we have set up a ‘green team’ for boys of 10-12 years of age who are either academically challenged or in danger of exclusion.

“We also want to break the perception that Islington is the preserve of the white middle-classes,” continued Andrew. “25 per cent of those that use the LNR are from ethnic minorities. We now have a gardening group that Asian elders and a local lunch club participate in. In this way we can bring different communities together.”

A newly installed interactive display is the latest means of encouraging community participation. Funded through the *Wildspace!* grant, it enables visitors to record sightings of key species within the LNR for the benefit of the London Records Project.

CASE STUDY – Gillespie Park, Islington

Gaining involvement from all aspects of the community is a key element of *Wildspace!* It’s an attitude that hasn’t gone unnoticed by Olive Abrahart, a volunteer at the community centre bordering Gillespie Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in the London Borough of Islington.

“I run a luncheon club here for a number of the area’s elderly residents and we’ve become involved in various activities run by the Ecology Centre based in the park. Over the last year or so the programme of events has really taken off.

“A small plot of land has been made available to us for gardening and I regularly take four pensioners there to grow vegetables. Staff at the Ecology Centre also recently brought some troughs, soil and plants down for less mobile people to make hanging baskets.

“I have also taken part in a ‘Walking for Health’ event along with a number of other residents – old and young. It really opened my eyes to the value of the park. And to think that this beautiful wooded area is sandwiched between a railway line and Arsenal football ground.”

In an urban setting **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)** can be an important link to nature for residents. They can also help to bring different communities closer together. It’s an attitude encouraged by *Wildspace!*, an English Nature grant scheme supported by the New Opportunities Fund.

CASE STUDY – Parkland Walk, Haringey

For Jayne Rowe, Parkland Walk is much more than just a place to walk her pet labrador. It’s a welcome escape from the noise and fumes of the city and, as such, deserves to be a thing of local pride.

“It’s a lovely walk and one that I do every day, but I felt that it wasn’t getting the attention it deserves. Rather than just moaning, I set up the Parkland Walk Volunteers.

“With a grant from the BTCV we were able to buy tools to cut overgrown vegetation from the path – important if people are to feel safe.

“There’s also the question of litter... and kids. We recently removed a partially burnt-out car from under one of the bridges. As the petrol tank was intact, any further attack could have damaged the bridge so we towed it out that evening. We can act much faster than the Council.

“The more school kids are encouraged to take part in events linked to the walk, the better. If they learn to take pride in and a responsibility for their surroundings, they will be less inclined to damage their surroundings.”

“Parkland Walk really is about bringing people and wildlife together,” said David Bevan, Conservation Officer for the London Borough of Haringey.

Along with Islington Council and conservation charity BTCV, the Borough is working on a *Wildspace!* project to create a nature trail along the length of Parkland Walk LNR. At four and a half miles long, this is London’s longest LNR and follows a disused railway line.

“The embankments and cuttings support a huge range of habitats and wildlife – over 300 species of flowering plant as well as animals such as muntjac deer. But it’s also used extensively by people to walk and cycle along.

“Introducing a nature trail to combine these two elements makes good sense.”

The trail will be marked out with numbered posts – easy to replace if vandalised – and will feature four interpretation panels.

The team are also producing two nature trail booklets for children and adults as well as a teacher’s pack. Similarly, it has gained wide participation from local schools in outdoor education sessions, a summer play scheme, and walks and talks it holds at nearby Railway Fields LNR.

“We’ve been liaising closely with a range of groups at all of Haringey’s LNRs,” said local BTCV representative Jan Wilson. “There have been joint workdays where local people have generously volunteered their time to help manage important habitats. They have come away feeling a real sense of ownership of the reserves, having spent a day working on them.

“Haringey isn’t a borough with many resources so getting the *Wildspace!* grant is not something we take lightly. It has been of huge benefit to our programme of work.”



With close to 1,600 people giving up their time to support English Nature projects every year, our volunteers are a vital asset. As well as being out there on the ground, getting the job done, they're helping to spread the message that sites and species need our protection. And in some ways that message is made all the more powerful coming from a volunteer rather than a paid member of staff.

"People trust and respect volunteers for what they do," said English Nature Volunteer Programme Manager, Anne-Marie Fraser. "Their support provides direct benefits to people, wildlife and to the special sites they protect. They are invaluable in forming close links with communities and encourage people to take an interest in and actively support nature conservation."

And, of course, they're a boon to English Nature. "They give us access to a huge range of new skills and experiences, increase the amount of work that we can do and help us to cope with ups and downs in our workload," she said.

A measure of how highly English Nature values its volunteers is the recently introduced staff handbook *Involving volunteers*, designed to help staff better cater for volunteers' needs.

"It is all too easy for staff to forget the things which really matter to volunteers – like the motivation behind them becoming one in the first place. For most of our volunteers, motivation comes from a commitment to nature conservation, but we need to remember that there are ways that we can help to keep a voluntary role enjoyable and fulfilling," said Anne-Marie. "We want to set high standards to ensure volunteers receive the recognition and support they deserve – from reimbursement of their out-of-pocket expenses to the provision of information on health and safety or the loan of protective clothing."

Volunteers

– a hand in English Nature's success

Volunteers from an array of different backgrounds are at the heart of all English Nature activities, bringing with them a wealth of skills. Here we meet a handful of the people giving up their time for the organisation and enjoying every minute of it...

Leading the way **Peak District and Derbyshire Team**



Fuelling interest in fossils – Volunteer White Peak Guide, Martin Cruttenden joined Community and Publicity Officer, Debbie Worland (off camera) to give kids a lesson in plaster cast fossil production in the Peak District and Derbyshire Team's marquee at the Bakewell Show in August

Retired British Coal national sales director, Martin Cruttenden has made a seamless transition into leading walkers through the White Peaks for English Nature. For a keen walker and nature lover, the voluntary role is perfect.

"I've always been very interested in botany," said Martin. "I'm a keen gardener and just like walking."

And the walks give Martin the chance to focus on his other great passion – geology. A geologist by training, Martin had never put his knowledge to use professionally until he became a White Peak Guide in 1994. Originally, the White Peak Guides gave a generalised overview of the White Peak's wildlife. But with expert knowledge on tap amongst the volunteers there are now topic areas to suit a range of interests, including medieval Lathkill Dale and a range of wildlife-focused outings. The enthusiasm the guides have for their specialist subjects rubs off on those around them.

"Volunteers are an integral part of English Nature. They give us invaluable assistance in managing National Nature Reserves and are an essential component of our work on species advice."

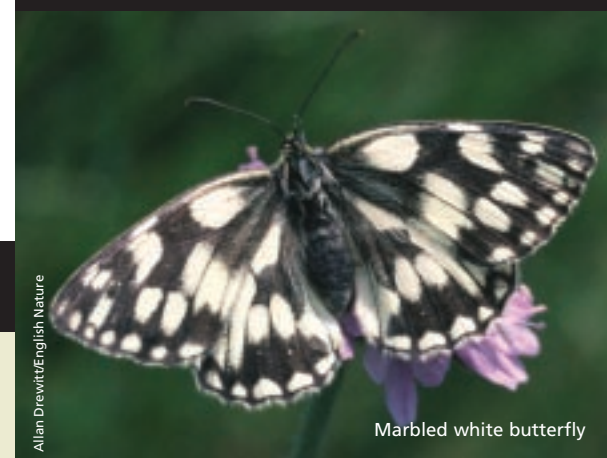
Andy Brown, Chief Executive of English Nature

"I particularly like the geology walk," Martin said. "It's something most people know little about and they can get very excited about it."

Volunteering for English Nature, Martin sees himself as an ambassador for conservation and wildlife. "I like to think I open people's eyes to the beauty of nature and the need to manage it to some degree."



A rare moment's pleasure **Humber to Pennines Team**



Marbled white butterfly

A renegade, bandit, eco warrior, freelancer – that's how volunteer John Hitchcock describes the role he played in securing healthy water levels at Thorne Moors.

His passion for conserving some of the area's indigenous marshland flew in the face of hundreds of years of intensive drainage to expand the local agricultural interest.

"We were running the gauntlet, doing what we had to do – bandits if you like," said John. "And the dams we built exist to this day and are now maintained by English Nature."

Where once his efforts were seen as renegade, they are now regarded as practical good sense and damming drains is seen as an important part of the long-term management of the moors, which have since been declared as a National Nature Reserve – the Humberhead Peatlands.

And there have been rewards. It was while carrying out the English Nature butterfly survey as a volunteer that he stumbled across a butterfly last seen in 1870 and thought to be extinct in the area – the marbled white.

"This is a lovely place to be," said John. "And it's made all the more lovely when you see something you never dreamed you'd see in your lifetime."

Getting to grips with bats **Peak District and Derbyshire Team**



Pipistrelle bat

Badgers were Sue Crookes' first passion and she is still the secretary of the local badger group. But then she laid eyes on a bat. The rest is history.

Eighteen years of badger study had to take a back seat when the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's Administration Officer learned of the plight of bats.

Indeed, hanging beside Sue in her office is a bat. She rescued it from a window casement where it had been trapped for two days and is feeding it every three hours whilst going about her daily business. She then takes it to a fellow volunteer for round-the-clock care.

Her 18-month training has left her ready for anything – from counselling homeowners through their fear of bats to identifying different species. She is happy to be involved in talking to people about these specially protected species and helping people to understand and care about them – however long it takes.

"As a batworker you have to be ready to come in from a gruelling day at work and find a message flashing on your answer machine and respond to it straight away. Our role is as much about liaising with the homeowner as it is about conserving bats."

Give them a hand **Thames and Chilterns Team**

More than 50 volunteers gave up some more of their time – to eat, drink and talk shop at an English Nature 'thank-you' bash.

The occasion was organised by Rachel Dedman, Site Manager for Aston Rowant and Barton Hills National Nature Reserves in the Chilterns, as part of National Volunteers Week in June.

Individuals were joined by members of local groups the Sonning Common Green Gym, conservation charity BTCV, North Chilterns Trust, and Oxford Conservation Volunteers for a nature walk, a talk, a spot of bat detection, a look at a moth trap and a chat.

"Our volunteer groups particularly enjoy completing whole projects. At Aston Rowant NNR we have been focusing on the juniper regeneration programme," said Rachel.

"Together we have built several juniper enclosures to protect these endangered bushes from grazing. The volunteers have also designed a planting-out nursery where propagated cuttings will be planted out this autumn under the careful supervision of dedicated 'juniper-volunteer', Will Messenger. Their enthusiasm is only to be admired.

"Volunteers are very important to us, it's their nature reserve. We want people to actively take part in helping to look after the environment and having a say in its future. Everyone involved finds it very rewarding – it is tremendous fun."

Anyone interested in getting involved should contact Rachel on 01844 351833.

Opening doors Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Team

Hands-on experience opened the doors to a masters degree in conservation at University College London for volunteer Frances Hitchinson. And she's left a legacy – a Lizard National Nature Reserve Voluntary Warden handbook – to help other Lizard NNR volunteers make as much of the experience as she did.

Much of her time was spent looking after the Lizard NNR's resident traditional breeds – Shetland ponies, Exmoor ponies and Soay sheep. But by the end of the stretch she had turned her hand to many more aspects of English Nature's

work, from looking at health and safety issues to organising a training day in organic farming.

"I loved my time as a volunteer," said Frances, who plans to return to the role when she finishes her MSc. Site Manager for the Lizard NNR, Ray Lawman sees fantastic benefits for both English Nature and the students involved in the volunteer programme.

"It has made such a tremendous difference to our work because we can manage volunteers properly and get an extra pair of hands where it's needed most. In some cases we're upping our productivity by 100 per cent.

"At the same time we listen to them and make sure they're getting what they need out of their time with us."

The Lizard NNR handbook aims to help with this, giving new volunteers an insight into the NNR, its history, a description of the habitat, and activities they can get involved in.

"It definitely helped me get on my course. My geography degree didn't have that much relevance to conservation so this was great for my CV."

Want to know more?

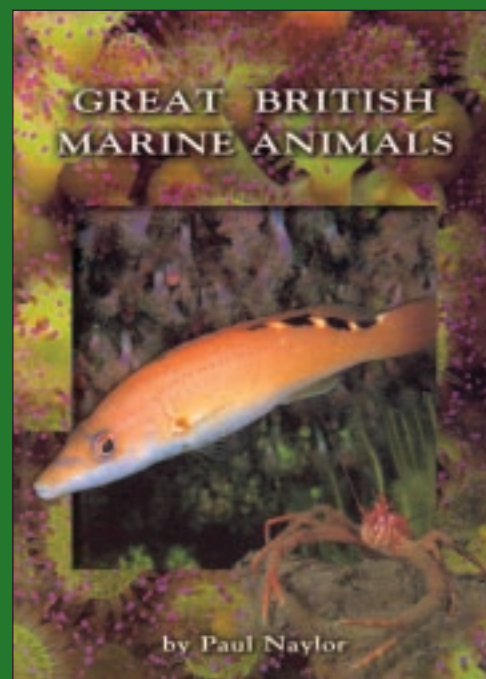
For more information on English Nature's National Volunteers Programme you can contact:

Anne-Marie Fraser, Volunteer Programme Manager,
Bullring House,
Northgate, Wakefield,
West Yorkshire WF1 3BJ

Tel: 01924 334542,
or www.english-nature.org.uk and look at the volunteer pages.

For information on projects in your area, contact the English Nature Enquiry Line on 01733 455100.

Book review



Great British marine animals
Published by Sound Diving Publications,
£14 (ISBN 09522831 4X)

*"I must go down to the sea again
To the lonely sea and the sky.
I've left my outstanding new field guide there
I wonder if it's dry."*

(with apologies to Spike Milligan)

The coldest fortnight of my life was spent on a marine biology course one March at Port Erin, Isle of Man. It came hard to a student to have to get up in a frozen dawn to catch the tides, but it was such a fascinating and involving course, I didn't really mind. What treasures I found in rock pools, but never, sadly, the spiny squat lobster, a beast which assumed mythic status to me. I wish I had had this terrific book with me then. Written for non-specialists, it is a selection of more than 7,000 marine animals in British waters, and includes the most frequently seen and obvious animals selected from each main group.

The book would be worth buying just for the lovely underwater photographs alone, but it has an excellent text, which shows how these animals go about their lives. The book is a real bargain – and thoroughly recommended for your next seaside holiday.

Reviewed by **Dick Seamons,**
English Nature Enquiry Service

WHAT'S ON? GUIDE

OCTOBER

OCT
4

The story of Lathkill and Mandale Mines – guided walk

10am, Derbyshire Dales NNR, Derbyshire

📞 **Contact: English Nature on 01629 816640**

OCT
5

Fungus Foray on Dersingham Heath and Woods – guided walk

2pm, Dersingham Bog NNR, Norfolk

📞 **Contact: Chris Betts on 01485 543044**

OCT
11

Nature's Bounty – guided walk

10-11am, Richmond Park NNR, Greater London

📞 **Contact: Wildlife for All on 020 7935 7430**

OCT
12

Wild Mushrooms and Toadstools – guided walk

2-4.30pm, Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR, Merseyside

📞 **Contact: Lynne Collins on 01704 578774**

OCT
15

Fungi Walk – guided walk

10am, Aston Rowant NNR, Oxfordshire

📞 **Contact: Rachel Dedman or Stephen Blow on 01844 351833**

OCT
19

Woodcarving on the Mosses Day – craft workshop

11am-3.30pm, Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR, Shropshire

📞 **Contact: Joan Daniels on 01948 880362**

OCT
31

Halloween

Spooky tales in the dark woods on All Hallows' Eve. Dress up and bring a lantern as there will be a prize for the best of each.

6.30-8.30pm, Castle Eden Dene NNR, County Durham

📞 **Contact: Nick Haigh on 01915 860004**

NOVEMBER

NOV
8

Lowly Plants in Winter – guided walk

10.30pm, Hartland Moor NNR, Dorset

📞 **Contact: Jim White on 01929 557450**

NOV
9

Eccup Reservoir – guided walk

A great place to see Red Kites, 10am, Eccup Reservoir, West Yorkshire

📞 **Contact: Marie Bowness on 0113 218 1040**

DECEMBER

DEC
7

A Green Christmas – crafts demonstration

10am AND 1pm, Castle Eden Dene NNR, County Durham

📞 **Contact: Nick Haigh on 01915 860004**

DEC
14

Guided Walk on Thorne Moor – guided walk

10.30am-1.30pm, Humberhead Peatlands NNR, South Yorkshire

📞 **Contact: Darren Whitaker on 01405 818819**

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

WHEN NATURE CALLS

The more mature readers amongst you will recall the sylvan tones of C. Gordon Glover as he spoke the introduction to those lovely programmes *The Countryside in...* broadcast in the late 1950s. "September of the summer equinox, her gardens cartwheeled with gossamer where the fat spiders, striped like tigers, wait for their nectar-seeking prey," he intoned to a tremulous harp in the background. I may decide to write future columns about the Enquiry Service in this poetic way, but some enquiries are far from poetic. Sarah took a call from a man who claimed to have poisoned badgers in his garden and wanted us to take away the bodies and give him some more effective poison. She did all she could to get him to reveal his address, phone number etc, but he rang off. A wind up? Perhaps, but she didn't think so.

There haven't been as many snake calls as I thought there would be, with all the hot weather, but bats were very active. I had one interesting call from a concerned lady who was worried about catching rabies from an injured bat. She had prodded the bat with a pen, and then sucked it. The pen, not the bat! I hope I was able to reassure her.

It was sad to hear of the passing of Max Nicholson, our greatest conservationist and polymath. I hope his biography will be written soon. And also sad to hear of the passing away of Guy Mountford, of Peterson, Mountford and Hollom field guide fame. I was musing on this when someone phoned to say how thrilled she was to have seen a red kite over her village. Isn't life full of connections! Without Max Nicholson, who was one of the greatest ornithologists, there probably wouldn't be red kites in the sky for the lady to identify, using her copy of *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* by Peterson, Mountford and Hollom. It was first published in 1954 and went into four editions.

Enjoy the autumn.

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

The writing on the wall

England's only known Ice Age cave art has been discovered at Creswell Crags Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The northernmost discovery of its kind in the world, this archaeological find re-writes the textbooks, which currently state that Ice Age cave art does not exist in Britain. It is also great news for English Nature and English Heritage – not only in providing more of an insight into the site, but in reinforcing the need to improve facilities for visitors to learn from it.

Great interest has been shown in this find made by leading archaeologists Dr Sergio Ripoll, Dr Paul Bahn and Dr Paul Pettit with regional and national press coverage as well as documentaries planned by the BBC.

As well as being an SSSI, the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument for its national archaeological importance. It has produced numerous artefacts and provided rare evidence of Ice Age human occupation.

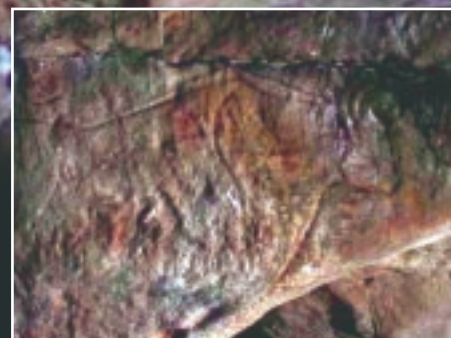
Not only is this discovery a satisfying link between the archaeological and the geological significance of the area, it is testament to the good work Creswell Heritage Trust has carried out in partnership with English Nature and English Heritage in improving access to the site while safeguarding it.

Conservation Officer for Lowland Derbyshire, Dan Abrahams, advises Creswell Heritage Trust on how to manage the site to preserve its geological interest.

“Creswell Crags is the principal geological site within the Southern Magnesian Limestone Natural Area,” he said. “It is a site of national and international importance for its sequence of sediments and the vertebrate fossils they contain. More than 770,000 mammal bones, including mammoth, woolly rhino and hyena, have been recovered, as well as an unparalleled record of fossil birds and fish.

“‘Working out’ – excessive excavation – of many of the caves by earlier archaeologists in the late 19th century and early 20th century has made the conservation of any remaining unexploited cave sediments of critical importance.”

The find is a fantastic boost to the Creswell Heritage Trust's Heritage Lottery Fund bid. Creswell is already among Britain's most important sites for interpreting Ice Age life, being the only place in the country where children and adults can learn the story on site.



Cave art of the ibex, an animal not thought to have existed in Britain

Sergio Ripoll

Main geological site features

Creswell Crags

- is one of the three richest sites in Britain for fossil mammals. The sediments, both in the caves and in the valley slopes below, have produced a great quantity of mammal remains, including spotted hyena, woolly rhino, reindeer and mammoth.
- is a major educational and research resource with 35 British museums holding exhibits from the site.
- provides an unparalleled record of fossil birds and fish.

An improved visitor centre and museum will be a great way to get people thinking about Ice Age man and the Southern Magnesian Limestone Natural Area as a whole.

“Every European country has a museum telling the story of life in the Ice Age, except Britain,” said Creswell Trust Manager, Nigel Mills. “We hope to change this.”