



Local knowledge, local action

Inspiring people close to home

The lure of LNRs
Why Local Nature Reserves
are thriving

Your coast needs you
Our maritime environment
is everyone's business

Living close to the land
SSSI Award winners have a story to tell

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

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

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

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

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

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



Awarded for excellence

Cover picture



Cover photographer: Paul Keene

People are most inspired by local conservation issues, hence our attendance at shows such as the Royal Bath & West and our promotion of LNRs (see feature on pages 4-5).



brief update

Breckland wildlife status upheld

Over 13,000 hectares of East Anglian countryside will remain an area protected for wildlife after a challenge to its designation was dismissed by the Court of Appeal.

The ruling upheld English Nature's decision to notify the section of Breckland straddling the Suffolk/Norfolk border as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 2001. At the time of the notification, the land was recognised as supporting nearly half of Britain's stone curlew population, a rare and declining bird whose numbers have fallen by 85% in the past 50 years. The judgement also confirms that the

SSSI status does not infringe on the Human Rights of the landowner who originally brought the case.

"We are delighted that our scientific opinion has been upheld again following a rigorous legal test," said Dr Andy Clements, English Nature's Director for Designated Sites. "The fact that the Breckland Farmland SSSI stands is good news for stone curlews. The judgment does not affect our ongoing commitment to work positively with landowners and managers in Norfolk and Suffolk to help them continue farming to provide the right conditions for this unusual and charismatic bird to flourish."

Geology wins in cliff-face inquiry



Black Rock Cliffs

A geological snapshot of Ice Age life will remain on view to the public after the Deputy Prime Minister ruled that it was too important to obscure.

Black Rock Cliffs in Brighton are a unique example of a fossilised raised beach with glacial deposits, containing valuable insights into how sea levels and climate change have affected the landscape over thousands of years.

Part of Brighton to Newhaven Cliffs SSSI, these cliffs are also an important

fossil record of mammoths, woolly rhinos and primitive horses, attracting school and university parties from around the world.

In March 2002, Brighton and Hove Council applied to stabilise a 200-metre section of the cliffs following evidence that it was crumbling onto the undercliff path below. English Nature objected to the plans, however, as they proposed, amongst other things, enveloping the cliff-face in a wire mesh, which would obscure its key geological features. Despite English Nature and the Council working to find a solution since 2000, the application finally went to a Public Inquiry in January this year. Last month's ruling is now being seen as a test case.

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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

Best in show



Children who took part in the fossil quiz received plesiosaur pens and stood to win cameras, books and encyclopaedias

English Nature has been taking full advantage of the summer shows to bring the conservation message to members of the public.

This year's Royal Bath & West Show was the most successful yet for the Somerset & Gloucestershire and Wiltshire teams. Themed around fossils and featuring a life-size replica of an ichthyosaur, the English Nature display stand drew a good crowd, with staff on-hand to provide advice and talk about the organisation's work in the area. Their efforts were rewarded when the teams took the award for Outstanding Trade Exhibit, the first time that this has been given to a conservation organisation in the show's 55 year history.

The RHS Flower Show at Tatton Park, Cheshire was the setting for

'Tomorrow's garden for wildlife', a joint project between Chester Zoo and English Nature. The garden was intended to show simple measures that can be taken to increase biodiversity in a small suburban back garden. The main areas of interest included:

- encouraging butterflies by providing food plants,
- composting of organic/green waste, and
- providing the habitat required for the declining song thrush population.

The garden was constructed according to a fairly formal design, showing that wildlife gardening needn't mean unkempt lawns and overgrown shrubs.

Editorial

I was lucky enough to attend the SSSI award ceremony at the Royal Show earlier this month, and would be hard-pushed anywhere to meet such an inspiring and enthusiastic group of people as this year's award winners (see pages 12-13).

At lunch I sat next to Rizwana Shelley, who with her husband Tom, also won a special people and nature award in recognition of the work they have done to welcome people into their wood, Hoad's Wood SSSI. Listening to Rizwana talk about Hoad's Wood really made me think about what it is that turns people on to conservation. Rizwana is a physicist, and teaches at a local boys' state comprehensive school. She has a natural inquisitiveness for life and her easy enthusiasm is infectious. Not surprisingly, the boys at her school achieve outstanding results. These same boys come as volunteers to Hoad's Wood, and in just 18 months have helped bring it back into favourable condition.

It is "the singer not the song" that counts, many say. In this issue we celebrate local action and local people who, like the Shelleys, sing for wildlife.

I hope you enjoy reading this July issue of English Nature Magazine. As always, I would love to hear from you. Please get in touch.

Amanda Giles



The rise and rise of Local Nature Reserves

Steve Berry explains why English Nature has focused on helping local authorities put more resources into Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

One of the most unsung success stories of post-war nature conservation must surely be that of LNRs. There are now more than 1,100 LNRs in England, covering over 30,000 hectares, but until recently they have existed as hidden treasures; their value to people and nature largely unappreciated. This lack of recognition prompted English Nature to initiate a celebration of LNRs between 14 and 25 July 2004. Local authorities, communities and others responsible for LNR management held more than 180 celebratory events. These gave an indication of the diversity of attractions LNRs have to offer, from rockpooling to wildlife safaris, and treasure hunts to teddy bears' picnics.



Children at a mini-beast workshop, Ash Common LNR, Somerset

The celebrations offered something for everyone. Community Liaison Officers, funded by English Nature's Wildspace! grant scheme via the Big Lottery Fund (formerly the New Opportunities Fund), were instrumental in organising these activities. Some events were mainly for fun, but many had a strong educational focus. By providing children with opportunities to experience nature, the chances are that their instinctive interest in

wildlife will be nurtured and grow. The legislation under which LNRs operate is the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. This laid the foundations for post-war nature and landscape conservation in Britain and has proved to be a masterpiece of planning and foresight. Although the Act itself drew no major distinctions between National Nature Reserves and LNRs, the latter have developed their own distinct identity over the last half-century, their main role being to give people contact with nature close to their homes.

LNRs vary immensely. They can be huge, like the 1,000 hectares of Farndale in the North York Moors, or tiny, like the very first geological LNR, Nore Hill Pinnacle in Surrey, which covers a mere 0.01 ha. Some are rural or, increasingly, urban, like the many ex-industrial brownfield sites and former railway lines now so rich in wildlife.

Whatever and wherever they are, LNRs bring people and wildlife together. Although most are still

managed by the local authorities who created them, local people have a growing voice in how they are run. In some cases, local communities have taken over the management completely (see adjoining article on friends groups). If it's true that people care most about what is closest to them, then this is indeed a hopeful trend.

There is now at least one LNR in more than 80% of all district council or unitary authority areas in England. But English Nature would like to see still more LNRs, provided that adequate resources are devoted to their management. The long-term goal is that there should be one hectare of LNR for every 1,000 people. This is an ambitious target, but we are now heading rapidly in the right direction.

Restoring the chalk streams at Nine Wells LNR, Cambridgeshire



Why friends can make a difference

Community involvement in the management and care of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) is at the heart of their long-term sustainability. Two new friends groups took up the challenge of reserve management during the LNR celebrations in July.

Wildspace! projects run by the Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust and Bournemouth Borough Council launched friends groups for Occombe Valley Woods LNR and Millhams Mead LNR this month.

The Wildspace! grant scheme, supported by English Nature and the Big Lottery Fund (formerly the New Opportunities Fund), funds projects demonstrating strong community involvement. A key part of this is the establishment and support of friends groups.

These groups are the cornerstone of support for many LNRs and are important in the development and delivery of LNR management plans. Groups can range from the fairly formal with clearly defined roles, such as chair and treasurer, to those which thrive on the informal energy and enthusiasm of their members. Equally diverse are the roles that friends groups play: some are very active in practical site management, whilst others take a lead in championing the cause of the LNR and steering future developments.

Friends groups are also important as social networks. Members can get to know others, and friendships often develop that extend beyond the group. Anna-Marie Ford is a Community Parks and Countryside Officer with Bournemouth Borough Council. "Local residents needed little encouragement from us to create the Friends of Millhams Mead LNR group – so many people already felt strongly about the site. They are guided by us, but, along with the four existing groups in our area, give an awful lot of input into site management. There are other benefits too – it's an opportunity to learn new skills and a chance to enjoy some physical work out in the fresh air."

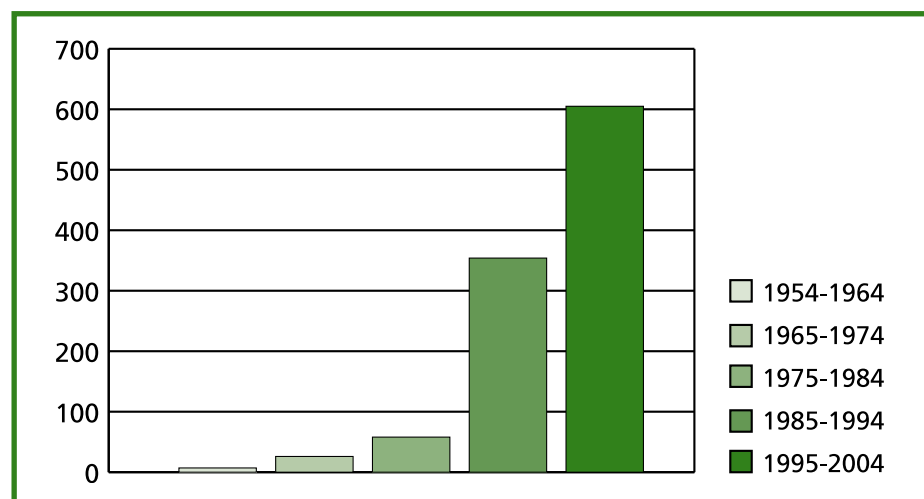


Figure 1. The growth in LNRs declared in England in successive decades since 1954.



The Shot Tower, now an environmental education and visitor centre

Alex Robb

A volunteer's story

"I'm a local resident and can see the top of the tower from my bedroom window," said volunteer, Ian McKinnon, "so I've adopted this as my local patch."

"I've been involved here for 10 years and lead volunteer groups, which is how most of the maintenance and habitat enhancement work is done."

"It's hard work, but we've achieved so much as a community; we've created a thriving reed bed; we built a kingfisher bank which was used successfully this year and it's great to watch the young kingfishers learning to fish. And then there are the water voles. We're here in the middle of Twickenham and there's this amazing patch of nature on our doorstep. That's got to be worth conserving."

A towering achievement

Once the site of a gunpowder mill, Crane Park Island LNR is now a flourishing urban haven for wildlife and a focal point for the local community.



Kingfisher

Dennis Bright

Crane Park Island LNR is a tiny oasis of green on the River Crane in Twickenham. Accessible only by bridge, the 1.8 acre site was designated an LNR in 1986 and is now owned by the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and managed by the London Wildlife Trust. At one time, this was the site of Hounslow Gunpowder Mill, but all that remains now is the 83 foot Shot Tower at the entrance to the Reserve.

Since the mill's closure in 1926, the island has been slowly returning to nature and is now home to a diverse collection of wildlife and habitats. Thanks to the efforts of local volunteers (see box, left), the old millpool now contains a flourishing reedbed supporting reed warblers as well as three species of frog and numerous invertebrates. Kingfishers and nationally rare water voles have also colonised the riverbank.

So that more local people and schools can appreciate the LNR and enjoy its benefits, English Nature's Wildspace! grant scheme, supported by the Big Lottery Fund, awarded £25,000

to the London Wildlife Trust in March 2003 for use on display and interpretation materials. This formed the second phase of a major project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund to turn the tower into an environmental education and visitor centre. It was officially opened by Sir David Attenborough last month.

The centrepiece of the new development is a large interactive map of the River Crane valley. This was created with significant help from local people and reveals the history of the river corridor, describes its biodiversity and shows how it links to other nearby areas of green space.

Alex Robb, Project Manager for the Crane Park Island Project, said, "We had a vision that the tower could become a focal point for members of the local community. Here, they could learn about the rich heritage that has helped create the nature reserve and establish a flagship project for the London Wildlife Trust. The Wildspace! grant enabled us to realise this vision."

Local action need not be limited to local benefits. In fact, volunteers from the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve (NNR) have been co-ordinating their efforts with those of others abroad. The result has been some truly groundbreaking science.

The flight of

the whimbrel



The whimbrel caught and tagged by volunteers (above) and tracked by English Nature's Craig Ralston (above right)

Daniel Tate

A small, unassuming cousin of the curlew, the whimbrel makes a long spring passage each year from Africa to Iceland and Scandinavia. While not strictly native to the UK (there are small breeding populations in the Shetlands), it does stop briefly at up to 10 known roosting sites in England and Scotland to gather strength before continuing its journey. And that's about as much as anyone knew until recently.

Questions about its stay here, such as how long individual birds stay at specific sites and where they go during the day to feed, have long remained unanswered. "The number of the birds visiting the Lower Derwent Valley roost tend to peak at around 150 on a

single night" said Craig Ralston, the NNR's Assistant Site Manager. "It hasn't been clear, however, whether these same birds have been returning night after night or if we're seeing new ones each evening during April and May. Therefore, we didn't know whether 150 birds were passing through, or 1,000."

Solving such questions was something of a challenge – Craig needed more help. "Where at first we had only one volunteer, we were soon able to attract about 20 others from in and around the NNR," he continued. "One particular volunteer, Dave Tate, had been with us almost from the start and was particularly keen, so we asked him to co-ordinate the whole project."

This involved mounting a watch every night for a month to count the birds and note their time and direction of arrival, and arranging for a bird to be fitted with a radio tag. "I think that this was the first time tagging had been tried on whimbrels in Europe," Dave said. "We found that the tagged bird stayed in the area for five days."

It also enabled us to track it down during the day to permanent pastures some three kilometres from the roosting site."

The fact that whimbrels feed outside the Reserve suggests that a 'buffer zone' might be needed to protect this feeding habitat.

Dave also began to get in contact with other people monitoring whimbrels, not just in the UK, but also in Iceland, the Faroes and Scandinavia. "We want to compare the DNA of the tagged bird's feathers with those of birds at the breeding grounds. This way we can establish whether populations mix or keep very much to themselves."

"We learnt some valuable information about feeding this year," added Craig, "but next year I'd like to consider using satellite tracking. This would enable us to monitor the behaviour of the birds all the way north to their breeding grounds. And by tracking them on a website, we could get even more people involved."

Peter Roworth



Caption

The art of nature

Nature in Art and English Nature have organised an exhibition of specially commissioned works to help people reconnect with the natural environment.

English nature and the art of conservation

Thirty two British artists are featured in the exhibition, covering a variety of art forms from painting to sculpture, fabric to marquetry work. "Artists have the uncanny ability to see the natural world through both the minutest detail and the bigger picture," said Simon Trapnell, Director of Nature in Art. "We hope this exhibition will cultivate an appreciation and understanding of the diversity of art inspired by nature. The artist's way of seeing and of interpreting nature can help the rest of society get a hold on nature and conservation issues."

The exhibition dates are:

- Nature in Art, Twigworth, Gloucester. 20 July – 5 September 2004
- Pensthorpe Park, Fakenham, Norfolk. 11 September – 11 October 2004
- Kendal Museum, Cumbria. 8 November – 22 December 2004
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, London Wetland Centre, Hammersmith. 15 January – 1 March 2005

For more information visit www.nature-in-art.org.uk

Tumbling otters

"As an artist, it is the rhythm and restlessness of the natural world which fascinates and which I try to capture. But there's an interest too in life forms and their processes, so sometimes a little bit of the inquisitive naturalist creeps into the work."

"A good day out in the field might result in a considered drawing or painting which one hopes distils something of the day's experience. That hope is what Tennessee Williams best described as 'snatching the eternal out of the desperately fleeting'."

Bruce Pearson



Detail

Dragonflies

"It was sparked off by the large number of these insects seen during the summer of 2003. The light and shadow of a summer evening at the water's edge, light filtering through stems, rushes, branches, the excitement, shimmer of wings and water, the breeze, the body colours, the impossibility of focussing on the darting flight, reflections, dazzle, etc., all made a claim on the painter in me."

Ken Waterfield

Red Kites over the Chiltern Hills

"My work is typically large, dark and dramatic. Rugged cliff-faces housing colonies of distant seabirds are a recurring theme, though the chalk downland of the Chilterns and beyond is my greatest passion, and I spend my free time almost obsessively exploring the chalk scarp along the entire length of the Ridgeway."

Katrina Cook



Discovery in the grass

"We can never get away from the fact that whatever we experience whilst out there in the landscape, wherever we happen to be, it is a personal experience, as unique as a fingerprint, and yet it is the artist's job to explain this vision and to make it in some way understandable."

Michael Porter



Project Manager Keith Bowey and one of the young birds released

Soaring aspirations

The release of red kites in North East England earlier this month marked the official start of England's fourth red kite project known as 'Northern Kites'. There are high hopes for its success, particularly given the species' adaptability to new environments and its willingness to breed. Three other projects have already established the bird's presence in Scotland, and Northern Kites will provide a crucial link between populations north and south of the border.

Unlike the other projects, however, the setting for this one is semi-urban in Gateshead's Derwent Valley, and about one million people live within close vicinity of the release site. Northern Kites is managed by English Nature and The RSPB, and the initiative has attracted the backing of local interests. Gateshead

Council has invested money and manpower in the project, as have the other partners: Northumbrian Water, The National Trust and The Forestry Commission. The Heritage Lottery Fund and SITA Environmental Trust are also supporting the project financially.

"Partners here want the red kites to represent more than just a species in need," said Keith Bowey, Project Manager for Northern Kites. "We are going to use them as an emblem for the importance of biodiversity and sustainable development to the local community and the economy."

"If we had done this 20 years ago, people would have laughed at us. But we want to challenge people's perceptions. If we can have red kites flying over the M40 in the Chilterns, then why not over the MetroCentre?

Over the last 10 to 15 years, there have been immense economic, social and cultural improvements in this area and now it's time for biodiversity to play its part."

"One of the great things about a high profile wildlife project such as this is its potential for getting young people interested in the environment, wildlife and sustainable development," said Councillor John McElroy of Gateshead Council.

"The thought of red kites flying overhead is also a very aspirational one. Gateshead is generating a name for itself as a tourist centre and a great place to be. Northern Kites Project builds upon that idea and is therefore something that we wholeheartedly support."



The Gateshead waterfront – red kites could soon be wheeling overhead

Gateshead Council

A careful programme of release has already seen red kites returning to the skies over the Chilterns, Rockingham in the East Midlands and Yorkshire's Harewood Estate. Could we ever see them in the skies above the MetroCentre in Gateshead?

Why your coast needs you

Steve Kesson (Status Design & Advertising)



English Nature's vision is to make space for people and wildlife, through better planning at sea, setting aside areas free from extractive use and finding ways to help communities live with ever-changing coastlines

A healthy marine and coastal environment brings significant benefits to the national economy, and is important to the future of our coastal communities and the quality of all our lives.

Despite the successes in addressing some of the more obvious threats, our coasts and seas are still generally degraded and vulnerable to further damage. *The Maritime State of Nature Report for England – getting onto an even keel 2002* showed clearly that much coastal habitat has been lost and the seabed has been changed by our activities. Our marine environment continues to show signs of significant stress and low resilience to continuing pressures.

English Nature has been developing a plan of action over the last 18 months to try to reverse the trend. We have been talking to members of the public and many other organisations at each stage so that this plan fully reflects the needs of people and society.

On the basis of this, a draft maritime strategy, *Our coasts and seas – a 21st Century agenda for their recovery, conservation and sustainable use*, is now available for consultation, through our website, until 10 September 2004.

“Our vision is to make space for people and wildlife, through better planning at sea, setting aside areas free from extractive use and finding ways to help communities live with ever-changing coastlines,” said Maritime Protected Areas Officer Kimmo Evans.

Organisations and individuals who wish to participate in the consultation can do so by visiting http://www.englishnature.org.uk/science/coasts_and_seas/default.asp. Copies of the draft strategy can be obtained by calling the Enquiries Service on 01733 455 100.

Feedback gathered between June and September will be used to develop the actions, some of which are already being trialled, and the new partnerships needed to achieve our vision (see case studies opposite).

Meeting the strategy's key aims

New partnerships

Invest in Fish South West (www.investinfish.org)

We must improve fish stocks for tomorrow, but the needs of different communities and organisations dependent on the sea must also be protected. Invest in Fish is a three-year initiative in the South West which seeks to bring these aims together by consulting a diverse range of stakeholders: fishermen, scientists, retailers, restaurateurs, English Nature and other conservation groups.

“This is about building confidence in the product from the fisherman to the end user,” said Caroline Bennett, owner of Japanese sushi chain Moshi Moshi. “It’s pretty groundbreaking stuff. There’s never been a situation where all these different people have sat down in a room together and thrashed the issues out.”

Managing coastal change

North Norfolk research project

Our coastline is changing due to increased storminess and sea level rise. A research project, whose partners include Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, Defra, North Norfolk District Council and English Nature, is currently investigating what local communities understand and expect of coastal change and the natural processes behind it.

“I’m an artist by profession, but grew up on the coast, originally as a fisherman,” said Godfrey Sayers who also chairs a number of local environmental advisory groups. “I agree that we need to work with, rather than against, natural processes, but the actions required to do that won’t always sit easily with local landowners.

“Any move then to give the full facts to people whose livelihoods depend on the sea has to be good. But it also has to be a real dialogue, one that requires honesty and transparency on both sides and a willingness to take views onboard.”

Recovery

Finding sanctuary

English Nature is developing a project in the south-west of England that will rely on the experience and knowledge of local communities. The plan is to create a network of marine protected areas where no fishing is practised. Those consulted will include fishermen, anglers, conservationists and scientists. It is hoped that these areas will bring a wide range of benefits to different users. The project is being developed through community participation to discuss the need for and identify the best places for these areas.

Now is the time for... coastal wildlife

The good weather is one incentive to get down to the coast. A better one is the maritime wildlife that can be experienced at coastal reserves.



Alan James Photography

Basking shark

The steep cliffs of the **Lizard National Nature Reserve (NNR)** in Cornwall provide safe habitat for the raven, peregrine and chough – settled and breeding after a long absence. But this is also where you are most likely to see the second largest fish in the world – the basking shark. Up to 12 metres long, and weighing up to 7 tonnes, these gentle giants visit Cornwall during the spring and summer months to feed on plankton, and can sometimes be seen in sheltered bays and off headlands. If you spot a shark you can also contribute to the Wildlife Trusts' basking shark survey at <http://baskingsharks.wildlifetrusts.org/>

At the opposite end of the country, **Farne Islands NNR** offers the spectacle of thousands of young seabirds preparing to leave their nests. Some 18 to 21 species breed here regularly, including the shag, sandwich tern, roseate tern and arctic tern, which are present in internationally important numbers. The grey seal colony is also the largest on the east coast of England.

Alternatively, visit the **Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast** for its intertidal sea life. The coastline, at places such as the National Trust's **Newton Pool Nature Reserve**, is peppered with rock pools that offer crab hunts and much more: pink coralline algae, breadcrumb sponges, clusters of dogwhelks, tentacled sea anemones, starfish and sea slugs. For beachcombing, try **Embelton Bay**, great for sea potatoes (the brittle shells of sea urchins) and the butterfly-like shells of tellins.

Living close to the land

Maintaining Sites of Special Scientific Interest requires dedication and effort. This year, the SSSI Awards have rewarded 19 owners and occupiers who have gone the extra mile for wildlife.



Dr Tom and Rizwana Shelley,
Hoad's Wood SSSI, Kent

When they bought it at auction two years ago, Dr Tom and Rizwana Shelley found Hoad's Wood neglected and nearly impenetrable. With advice from English Nature and a lot of local help, they have been able to improve access, reduce fly tipping and restore the wood's essential character. Among those involved include teenagers on the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and also a group of local horse riders who, in return for being able to ride in the wood, keep a watchful eye on the site's condition.

"Tom and Rizwana are keen to manage their land to benefit wildlife," said Pauline Harvey of English Nature's

Kent team. "They've put in so much effort and are working to restore old coppice, widen rides to benefit plants and insects and create new ponds. They've also provided lots of opportunities for more people to get involved and learn about nature conservation."

"It was a totally unexpected, but very pleasant, surprise to receive the award," said Dr Tom Shelley. "We didn't feel that we had done anything special – we had fallen in love with the wood and did what we felt it deserved."

Bill Garner, Parkstone Golf Club, Luscombe Valley SSSI, Dorset

Parkstone Golf Club has been around since 1910 when it was a traditional heathland golf course. In the intervening years, pine, birch, gorse, rhododendron and strawberry tree have all encroached, changing the site's character entirely.

Despite initial opposition to the SSSI designation, the Club has quickly come to appreciate the need for heathland protection and restoration. Over the last decade it has worked with English Nature, the Forestry Commission and the local planning authority to remove hundreds of trees and create conditions ideal for heather to re-establish.

"The trees and rhododendrons were destroying the heathland character of the course," said course manager Bill Garner. "Now many of the original vistas have been re-instated and we have had great success in heather reinstatement. The golfers certainly appreciate it and some of our older players are delighted to see it look the way they remember it used to."

"The course is an oasis within suburban Parkstone for rare heathland wildlife like sand lizards, whose future here now seems secure. Thanks to the management efforts of the Club, their future there now looks secure," said Andrew Nicholson of English Nature's Dorset team.

Ian Rowland Hill, The Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham SSSI, Oxfordshire

The Northmoor Trust manages a large area of grassland, woodland and farmland along the Thames, which includes Little Wittenham Nature Reserve.

"The Northmoor Trust is extremely active with a wide range of educational and public initiatives that involve the SSSI," said Russ Money of English Nature's Thames & Chilterns team.

"They have undertaken lots of work for the benefit of the great crested newt for which the site is particularly important. They also do much beyond the boundaries of the SSSI to enhance and maintain BAP habitats and uncommon species."

"We're very proud of the site's SSSI status," said the Trust's Chief Executive, Ian Rowland Hill, "and now manage it sensitively and sustainably as a nature reserve. Part of that is about making people familiar with its special interest through guided walks, bat patrols, etc. But we're also keen to conserve this special landscape for future generations by effectively managing the impact of environmental change, including climate warming."



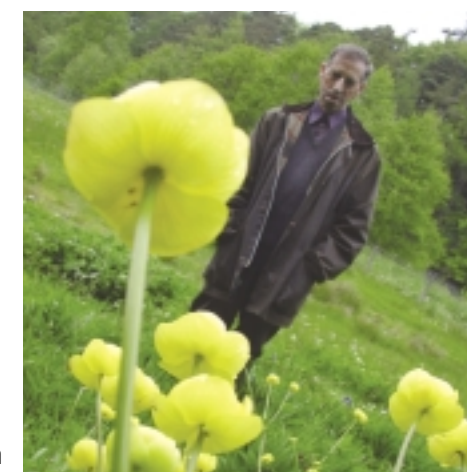
Paul Glendell/English Nature

Thomas Scott, Upper Teesdale SSSI, County Durham

Thomas Scott is one of the few farmers in Teesdale who still voluntarily manages land according to traditional practices. The land's favourable condition is a reflection of the fact that he exceeds what is required to maintain the condition of the SSSI and is committed in his dealings with English Nature.

"Thomas is the definitive good custodian of the countryside," said Stuart Hedley of English Nature's Northumbria team. "In a world where increasing numbers of people look to agri-environment support to diversify incomes whilst essentially trying to maintain intensive farming methods, people like him deserve thanks most of all."

"It's really nice to know that this kind of work is appreciated," added Thomas. "My father managed this land before me and only used phosphate on the pastures. I've been able to carry on those practices thanks to the compensation from English Nature, and get a great deal of satisfaction out of the wildlife that is benefiting."



James Johnston

People and Nature SSSI Award

This is the first year that English Nature is specifically rewarding the efforts of owners and occupiers to welcome visitors onto their sites. The People and Nature SSSI Award is particularly important as it recognises

the importance of reconnecting people with nature and allowing them to enjoy the added benefits this brings to their quality of life. This year, the award goes to Dr Tom and Rizwana Shelley, The Hawk and Owl Trust and The Northmoor Trust.

And the other winners are...

Mr Robert Maynard
Whittlesford – Thriplow Hummocky Fields SSSI

Mr William Fergusson
Oakmere SSSI

Mr Dominic Fairman
– Blisland Commons Ltd Bodmin Moor North SSSI

Mr Neil Downs
– Devon Sea Fisheries Committee Exe Estuary
– Dawlish Warren SSSI

Mr Andrew Poole
Birklands and Bilhaugh SSSI / Birklands West and Ollerton Corner SSSI

Peter Peretti
Bentley Priory SSSI

Mr John and Mr David Lomas
– Leek Moors SSSI

Nigel Middleton
– The Hawk and Owl Trust River Wensum SSSI (Sculthorpe Moor)

Mr C Forbes Adam
– Skipwith Common SSSI

Mr Alistair McGregor
Tweed Catchment Rivers – England: Till Catchment SSSI / Lower Tweed and Whiteadder SSSI

Mr Nick Wyatt
– Forest Heath District Council / Lord Iveagh – Elveden Farms Ltd Maidscross Hill SSSI

Mr James, David and Roger Laurie
– Gypsy Camp Meadows SSSI

Philip Everett – Crown Estate Windsor Forest and Great Park SSSI / Swinley Park and Brickpits SSSI / Broadmoor to Bagshoot Woods and Heaths SSSI

David Gore-Brown
– Bentley Wood Charitable Trust Bentley Wood SSSI

Mr Andy Poore
– Rushmoor Estate Cranborne Chase SSSI

Making grazing pay for farming and wildlife

Peter Wakeley/English Nature

Grazing needs to be managed if this important upland habitat is to be conserved

Last year the Sheep and Wildlife Enhancement Scheme was launched to encourage sustainable grazing and land use sensitive to the needs of wildlife. The crucial point for farmers was that it also made economic sense.

Derek Scrimgeour and his dogs

Summer is a very busy time at Keeping Lonscale Farm, near Keswick in Cumbria. Derek Scrimgeour farms 500 hectares, the majority of it upland fell that lies within the Skiddaw Group Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

With hundreds of sheep to shear, working days are long and hot. "There's not really any money now in the fleeces," said Derek, "but it is a job that has to be done for the welfare of the sheep."

He has been farming Keeping Lonscale for two decades now, but says that the last few years have been very tough indeed. That's why he decided last year to become one of the pioneers of a new project: the Sheep and Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (SWES).

Under SWES – a joint project between English Nature and Defra – Derek has entered into a five-year agreement that will see his flock of sheep reduce from around 1,000 to fewer than 800. The remaining sheep will spend less time on the fells to further ease the pressure on this sensitive habitat.

In return, Derek has benefited from the scheme's up-front approach to payments. He's a leading light in the world of sheepdog training and the SWES payment has meant that he can now develop that part of his business, offering 'master classes' to other dog owners.

According to English Nature Agriculture Policy Officer, Chris Reid, the benefits of

"The scheme has provided us with some much-needed capital," he said. "We're thinking of using it to convert some buildings so that people can come and stay on the farm."

schemes like SWES can only be extended if there is further reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). "English Nature argued strongly in the CAP reform process for a break in the link between subsidies and production, and for a shift in funds from direct subsidy to payments for providing environmental benefits. The first of these goals has been met. However, farmers will still be paid subsidies that are unconnected to environmental benefits. Funds must be shifted from direct subsidy to environmental reward if we are to see more benefits from schemes like the SWES and the existing agri-environment programme."

Over 100 farmers and groups of graziers with commonland rights joined the scheme during the first year, balancing sheep grazing and wildlife on 38,000 hectares of land. English Nature has worked with the Rural Payments Agency to distribute £2.5 million to sheep farmers across England, from Kent to Northumberland and Worcestershire to Suffolk.

The main focus has been in the uplands. Overgrazing is the main reason for SSSIs not being in healthy

condition. Over 45% of upland SSSIs are overgrazed. Most upland habitats do need grazing, but at the right level – the key is to get the balance right.

According to Dan Hunt, English Nature's SWES Project Manager, it can take a decade or more for overgrazed upland habitats to return to their former glory. However, in Cumbria the scheme is already delivering improvements.

"Reductions in sheep numbers have brought a very rapid vegetation response," he said. "Heathers are taller and many smaller and rarer plants, like mountain pansy, have been able to flower once again."

SWES offers practical solutions, like payments for shepherding. "That can sound a little strange – people think that we are paying for something that farmers would be doing anyway," Dan added. "But what we are asking them to do should really be called 'conservation shepherding'. We want farmers to see that their sheep graze across the entire hill.

"What we're about is finding practical solutions for balancing the needs of farming and conservation. And doing it through real partnerships with farmers has to be the best way."

The *Sheep and Wildlife Enhancement Scheme* and *Sustainable Grazing in the English Uplands* can be obtained from the Enquiry Service on 01733 455 100.

WHAT'S ON? GUIDE

JULY

JULY 29

Walk on the wildside – Mullion Cliffs

14.00, Mullion Cove, The Lizard NNR, Cornwall

Contact: 01326 240808

AUGUST

AUG 1

Dragons and Damsels

14.00 – 16.00, Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes NNR, Lincolnshire

Contact: 01476 584800

AUG 11

Dersingham Bog – its history and wildlife

15.00, Dersingham Bog NNR, Norfolk

Contact: 01476 584800

AUG 14

Green Woodcraft Day

11.00 – 16.00, Castle Eden Dene NNR, Durham

Contact: Steve Metcalfe or Nick Haigh on 0191 518 2403

AUG 15

Reserve Open Day

10.00 – 16.30, Bowness-on-Solway and Drumburgh Moss NNR, Cumbria

Contact: Rachel Osborn at Cumbria Wildlife Trust on 01539 816300 for more details

SEPTEMBER

SEPT 19

Writing on the Mosses

12.30 – 16.30, Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses NNR, Shropshire

Contact: Joan Daniels on 01948 880362 (weekdays), or 07974 784799 (weekends)

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

LETTERS

Dear Sir,

Your May number described how our attractive wildwoods, just after the last ice age, were shaped by large herbivores, most of which we exterminated. The only survivors are deer, believed then numbering over two million [Maroo, S and Yalden, DW (2000) Mammal Review, 30, 243-248].

Accommodating a human population that exploded during those 7,000 years from under 3,000 to over 40 million adults, we reduced native deer to less than one million, while inconsistently introducing some half a million of alien species.

While our single species devastates the environment, it is inexcusable to complain that wildlife has invaded "our" environment.

So it was commendable that your May number also urged attracting mammals and other wildlife back into areas we stole from nature.

Paradoxically, however, you published the conflicting views of a farmer finding fallow deer on her lawn, presumed to have ravaged her roses.

Perhaps I should sympathise, having cultured, budded and exhibited roses for decades. But I would find it far more pleasing and morally defensible to observe deer behaviour in my garden than stare at static introduced cultivars.

Your author included a biologically valid recommendation. Man is as entitled as any other predator to contribute to "the balance of nature" by eating meat, as other primates do.

So I share Anne Kelaart's recommendation of venison as good for our spiritual as well as physical health. But we must not indulge in bad biology or hypocrisy about our reasons for shooting deer.

Natural inter-relationships have been much more successful than our own often disastrous interference.

John K Fawcett

Ossie Palmer

Planting the seed of an idea

A single walk through a wildflower rich haymeadow inspired Dartmoor resident Dr John Seale to have a go at creating his own. Ten years on, he is introducing other gardeners and landowners to the joys of recreating this important local habitat.

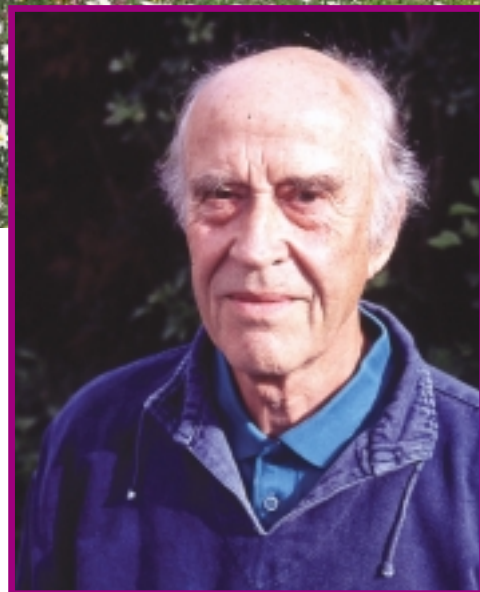
The four-acre parcel of land adjoining Southcombe House was in a state of some neglect when Dr John Seale bought it in 1992. Once a fine haymeadow, it had since been planted as an arboretum and was overrun with large patches of dense bracken, coarse grass and creeping thistle.

Recently retired, Dr Seale needed a project to get his teeth into. He contacted Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) for advice on how to restore it as a haymeadow. "Shortly after I moved here, I went on a guided haymeadow walk and was stunned by the colour and variety of plants that I hadn't seen before. I decided then that I wanted to emulate it."

Acting on the Authority's advice, he cleared the site of invasive species and began the summer and autumnal cycle of cutting and removing hay and grass.

"I bought 12 bales of hay taken from an ancient Dartmoor haymeadow, and spread them across small areas of ground. Not much happened at first, but by the second year these patches were thick with ox-eye daisy, rough hawksbit, yellow rattle and eyebright. I then took hay from these patches and repeated the process elsewhere."

Much of this is recorded in the leaflet, *Biodiversity in your Backyard – How to Create Your Own Dartmoor haymeadow*, produced by Action for Wildlife – The Dartmoor Biodiversity Project, a three-year project which aims to maintain and enhance the wildlife resource of Dartmoor by working with local people. Funding for Action for Wildlife is provided by DNPA, English Nature, the Environment Agency, and the Duchy of Cornwall, with support from Defra.



Dr John Seale

Ossie Palmer

Such was the leaflet's success among gardeners and landowners that Action for Wildlife organised a workshop at Southcombe House in June 2002, enabling Dr Seale to share some of his experience and enthusiasm. A further two have since taken place.

Action for Wildlife Assistant Project Officer, Sarah Mellor enjoys the participants' enthusiasm, "Some of those who have attended were already in the process of creating meadows in gardens or community areas.

"People have also swapped contact details in order to discuss ideas and even made visits to each other's projects to offer support, creating a kind of informal haymeadow forum," she said.

For more about creating wildflower-rich haymeadows and to see a copy of *Biodiversity in your Backyard*, visit www.actionforwildlife.org.uk. Alternatively, for a copy of English Nature's *Wildflower meadows: How to create one in your garden*, call 01733 455 100. For suppliers of seed from native British plants, visit www.floralocale.org