

# ENGLISH NATURE Magazine

Issue 77

January 2005



## The feel-good factor Why nature is the healthy option

Looking at Lindisfarne  
We visit an island NNR

Nature and art  
The story of the Shapwick Giant

Wildlife gardening  
Welcome the wildlife on your doorstep



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

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

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

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

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

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

You can also learn more about us via the Internet. Our address is:  
[www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

#### Cover picture



Cover photographer: Peter Wakely

Walkers enjoy the benefits of nature at the Ham Street Woods NNR in Kent (see Health and Nature features p 4-7)



# brief update

## Ancient wood pasture protected

David Slade



Calke Park covers 240 hectares

More than 200 ancient oak trees, one thought to be 1,200 years old, dominate the wood pasture at Calke Park in Derbyshire. Now English Nature has

safeguarded the future of this precious woodland by declaring it a National Nature Reserve. Calke Park is of global significance due to the quality of its wood pasture, which provides one of the rarest habitats in Europe. Calke's trees support a diverse range of deadwood invertebrates, including 350 species of beetle and 70 species of nationally rare insects.

Stewart Alcock, Property Manager at Calke Abbey – which, along with Calke Park, is cared for by the National Trust – said, “Calke Park is a precious and fragile oasis that requires careful long-term management and conservation. We are very excited by the NNR designation which demonstrates the value of the work the National Trust is doing to safeguard and share the nation's natural heritage, not just for visitors today but for future generations.”

Calke Park covers 240 hectares and is visited by 200,000 people a year.

David Slade



Wood pasture at Calke Park

## Land FACTs now on-line

The Forum for the Application of Conservation Techniques (FACT), which is co-ordinated by English Nature, has launched a family of websites that provide a wealth of information about land management for conservation. The website [www.fact-group.org](http://www.fact-group.org) offers links to other facilities and services, including special areas based on the popular Practical Solutions, Scrub Management and Herbicide

handbooks. Together, the websites offer access to all the current FACT and GAP publications, as well as giving news on the latest work. There is also a link to the Ecolots website where users can look for and advertise goods and services related to sustainable land management. The work of the Grazing Animals Project (GAP) is extensively covered and users can go direct to its website, [www.grazinganimalsproject.org](http://www.grazinganimalsproject.org)

## Seabed issues surface

Nearly a quarter of the sand and gravel used in England and Wales comes from the seabed. Dredging this removes the surface layer of the seabed,

BMAPA



Dredging removes the surface layer of the seabed

killing and dispersing species such as starfish, sea urchin and seaweeds. To address this, English Nature has launched a £2m, Defra-funded scheme for projects that improve our understanding of the impact of offshore aggregate extraction on the seabed and raise people's awareness of its nature conservation importance.

“There is much we need to learn about marine wildlife and how we can manage our activities to avoid damaging it,” said Victoria Copley, Marine Operations Advisor for English Nature.

## Mysteries of the deep unravelled

English Nature has shed some light on the mysteries of the ocean floor around England with the publication of six Marine Natural Area profiles. The reports highlight what is unique and important about each Natural Area as well as including information on water depth, ocean processes such as water movement and the distribution of habitats and species. The six Marine Natural Areas are The Mid North Sea, The Eastern Channel, The Irish Sea, The Southern North Sea, The Western Approaches and The South Western Peninsula.

“These profiles provide an essential context for managing specific sites and emphasise the nature conservation value of the wider sea,” said Leigh Jones, English Nature's Marine Natural Areas Officer. “It is hoped they will be used by planners, policy makers and anyone involved in the stewardship of our seas.”

All six profiles are available on a single CD-rom by contacting English Nature's enquiry service at [enquiries@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@english-nature.org.uk) or calling 01733 455100.

## Editorial

Happy New Year! If one of your New Year resolutions is to get out and get fit, then this issue of English Nature magazine makes relevant reading.

Nature-therapy is now often prescribed as part of the perfect medicine. Healthy exercise and fresh air combined with the peace and tranquillity of natural places are now officially recognised, not surprisingly, as being good for us. On pages 4 to 5 we look at why the natural world is so vital to our health and well-being, and we visit some innovative projects set up to help people get back in touch with nature. Walking must be one of the easiest and most satisfying ways of doing this, and on pages 6 and 7 we go to Goring in Oxfordshire and hear how people here have benefited from their local Health Walk scheme.

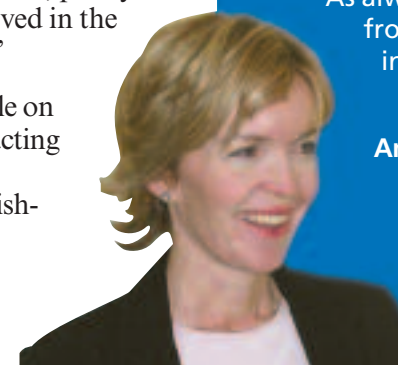
National Nature Reserves must be some of the most inspiring places to walk in. In the first of a new series on NNRs, on page 8, we take a trip to Lindisfarne NNR in Northumberland, a place where sea and land are interwoven and where wildlife flourishes.

Such places inspire the artist in us. On pages 9 to 11 we look at sculptures and sleeping giants that have been created by people in response to the natural world.

Elsewhere, we bring you up to date on joint working for the countryside (page 12), new farm payments (page 13), wildlife gardening (page 14), and flood management (page 15).

As always, I enjoy hearing from you. Please get in touch.

Amanda Giles



Editor: Amanda Giles | Designed & printed by: Corporate Document Services, 7 Eastgate, Leeds LS2 7LY [www.cds.co.uk](http://www.cds.co.uk)  
Tel: 078106 55418 | on Evolution Satin (75% recycled post-consumer waste paper, elemental chlorine-free bleached), 17M.

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

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

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

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



# Choosing health

Being at one with nature makes us feel happy and healthy – but until recently no-one has thought too deeply why. Now we know.

**The Public Health White Paper, published recently, pinpoints our environment as one of the major factors affecting people's health. It calls for green spaces and the countryside to be prescribed as part of the perfect medicine.**

A dose of nature-therapy will contribute to three of the targets listed in the report, *Choosing Health*. These are:

- reducing obesity;
- increasing exercise – which reduces the risk of chronic diseases; and

- improving mental health – stress is currently the most common cause of sickness absence.

Dave Stone, English Nature's Development Manager for people and nature, explained, "There is now overwhelming evidence that nature-rich greenspaces, with their seasonal changes and variety of colour, stimulate people to enjoy regular physical exercise, breathing fresher air in an attractive environment. They are known to reduce anxiety whether it is by providing pleasant settings in which

to enjoy all forms of exercise, or just by being peaceful places to relax."

With more than 300 studies now proving these points, all the main agencies responsible for health and the environment are working together to ensure everyone has access to the natural world and the necessary information to reap its benefits.

On February 24, a partnership group of English Nature, the Countryside Agency, the Forestry Commission and Sport England will sign up to a Compact, or agreement, pledging their commitment to the common

goal of improving people's health. The Compact and a new report on links between the countryside and human health will be launched, under the umbrella of the Countryside Recreation Network, by Rural Affairs Minister, Alun Michael, and Public Health Minister, Melanie Johnson.

English Nature encourages urban planners to give people the chance to enjoy contact with nature and wildlife. We would like everyone to have an accessible 'doorstep' natural greenspace less than 300m from their home with at least a hectare of Local Nature Reserve for every thousand people. New right to roam legislation – the Countryside and Rights of Way Act – should make more natural areas accessible to local communities.

## Gardening to thrive

The Trunkwell Garden Project in Beech Hill, near Reading, shows how working with plants and trees can improve the health and well-being of disabled or disadvantaged people.

It is one of three projects run by national charity Thrive, which uses horticulture to help people build basic skills and social skills, improve their job opportunities or rebuild their lives after illness or accident. People of all ages attend, ranging from children with special needs, adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems, sensory or physical disabilities, to those with degenerative disorders such as dementia or people recovering after a major illness or accident. The project receives European Social Funding through joint-financing with Berkshire Learning & Skills Council.

Trunkwell Garden Project Manager, Sue Tabor, said; "The physical activity and emotional satisfaction gained from nurturing plants and working in the garden promotes good health. We also know that people can recover more quickly from illness or injury by working in nature."

Sarah Andrews started at Trunkwell 18 months ago, because of her learning difficulties. She completed the National Proficiency Tests Council 'Skills for Working Life' Level 2 certificate in horticulture and is now working for Level 3. Her talents were used when she was chosen to make a posy for HRH Princess Alexandra who visited Thrive, and she recently led a group making table decorations for a dinner with TV gardener Alan Titchmarsh.

For more information visit [www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk) or call 0118 988 5688.

The Trunkwell Garden Project



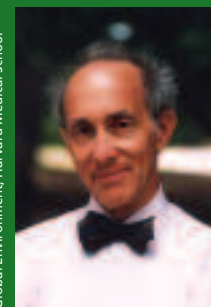
Courtesy of Thrive; James Finlay

## Green Gyms

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) runs a network of Green Gyms which give people a chance to get fit through practical conservation activities, like planting hedges, creating and maintaining community gardens or improving footpaths.

The initiative, first featured in English Nature magazine 12 months ago, has gone from strength to strength and there are now more than 60 Green Gyms across the UK with 5,000 volunteers. New ones are continually opening across the country including the latest in Basildon, Essex; Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire and Hull, Humberside.

Picture courtesy of the Centre for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School



Dr Chivian

## Global Warning

Nobel Peace Prize winner, Professor Eric Chivian, has issued a stark warning about the way humans have become separated from the natural world.

Dr Chivian, Director of the Centre for Health and the Global Environment at

Harvard Medical School, delivered this year's prestigious Darwin Lecture discussing 'How Human Health Depends on Nature.' He outlined what the consequences might be if we fail to understand that having a rich variety of wildlife is imperative to maintain the health of humans – and that the two are interdependent.

He said, "This lack of connection to the environment, this fundamental failure to understand that our health and lives depend on the health of the natural world is, in my view, the most important problem we face in the years ahead."

He highlighted some examples of how advances in human health have depended on the natural world.

### The loss of potential new medicines

- The Pacific Yew was routinely discarded as a commercially useless trash tree during logging of the old growth forests in the Pacific northwest USA until it was found to contain the compound taxol, during the US National Cancer Institute's massive screening programme of plant species for anti-cancer activity – (in this case, fortunately, before it was allowed to become extinct.)

### The loss of important medical research models

- In winter, black bears enter a three to seven-month period of hibernation known as 'denning.' All their bodily functions are suspended – yet they maintain a normal body temperature, remain alert and even deliver and nurse their cubs. But they never lose bone mass or develop osteoporosis as do bedridden or inactive human patients. Bears do this with substances in their blood that stimulate bone-forming cells and inhibit bone-dissolving cells. A full understanding of this would help us develop new methods of treating osteoporosis.

### The disruption of our ecosystems

- Lyme disease is spread by infected ticks and humans are an accidental host. It was observed that in the American West, few people had the disease. This may be because one of the tick's favourite hosts is the Western Fence Lizard, whose blood contains a substance that kills the infectious bacteria. Many lizard species are threatened – so what would be the incidence of Lyme Disease in the west if the Western Fence Lizard was wiped out?

For a full transcript of Professor Chivian's lecture, visit [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)



# Walking back to happiness

Every Saturday morning, a crowd of around 40 people gathers outside Goring Village Hall in Oxfordshire. The group, from a broad cross-section of ages and backgrounds, could easily be mistaken for a local rambling club as they prepare to head out into the nearby countryside. But there is not a rucksack, hiking boot, map or stick in sight. Sometimes, the village GP can be spotted among the buzzing throng...

Bernard Novell

**G**uided by a trained volunteer leader, some will be doing a short one-to-two mile walk, others a more challenging four miles with hills. They will all be stepping out at a good pace, faster than they would do alone – for this is an organised Health Walk.

This scene is repeated nearly every day of the week in Goring, with 25 leaders taking out more than 280 people aged from eight to 92 as part of the national Walking the way to Health Initiative.

Walking the way to Health is on track to get more than a million people walking to benefit their health and improve their quality of life. The scheme, created by the Countryside Agency and the British Heart Foundation, has extra funding from the New Opportunities Fund. It focuses mainly on people who are disadvantaged through living in areas of poor health and who do not see themselves as regular walkers.

A health walk is defined as ‘a purposeful brisk walk, undertaken on a regular basis.’

Experts describe walking as ‘almost perfect exercise’ as there is no need to buy any expensive equipment – and you don’t have to go far to take part so it is accessible to virtually everyone. There are now more than 350 local Walking for Health schemes across the UK.

Sid Ellis, 73, a health walk member from Berkshire, who is recovering from a stroke, said, “What have the health walks done for me? They have given me back my health and I reckon I am back now to where I was before the stroke. To my mind, they are the best medicine I can have.”

So how does Walking the way to Health get people out and about? In hundreds of communities, trained volunteers lead walks for those who prefer

to go out in groups – the social element is an important factor in relieving stress or depression for people who feel isolated. Health walk routes are available for those who would rather step out independently.

Local people plan routes, assess them for risk and publicise them. Doctors and other health professionals encourage their patients to take part. Thousands of step-o-meters have been given to front-line health staff, in partnership with the Department of Health, to encourage their patients to be more active. Results of a randomised control trial showed this approach was more effective than telling people to do more exercise.

**“NNRs offer an eye-opening, exhilarating experience that can really make you feel good to be alive.”**

Peter Ashcroft, the Countryside Agency’s WHI Project Manager said, “Thousands of lives and billions of pounds could be saved if more people were physically active. Lack of exercise is one of the root causes of the worrying rise in diabetes, poor mental health, obesity and falls suffered by older people.

“Walking is a great way of building physical activity into your everyday life – and at the same time, you can find out more about the great outdoors.”

For many, one of the most enjoyable things about walking is the chance to enjoy the beauty of the natural environment and take time to get to know the fascinating wildlife all around us.

There are 217 National Nature Reserves, with about 150 managed by English Nature, and there are another 800 Local Nature Reserves, all offering the perfect setting for a pleasurable walk.

A booklet called *Healthier Outlooks* has been produced jointly by English Nature and the NHS Health Development Agency, telling people how best to explore four of the North East’s most stunning National Nature Reserves on foot.

It was initially distributed through doctors’ surgeries and tourist information centres in the North East. But there has been a massive demand, so English Nature is hoping to roll out some similar ideas across the rest of the country in due course.

English Nature’s Interpretation and Events Manager, Rachel Lockwood, said, “Walking on National Nature Reserves is an ideal way to explore, examine and enjoy these very special places. NNRs offer an eye-opening, exhilarating experience that can really make you feel good to be alive.”

For a copy of the *Healthier Outlooks* booklet contact: [enquiries@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@english-nature.org.uk)

**Lindisfarne NNR is featured on page 8.**

Bernard Novell



Top: Walkers head out to search for bluebells and wild garlic on the Ridgeway Path West of Streatley, Berkshire.

Bottom: Limbering up for a Goring Health Walk, Chilterns, Oxfordshire.

## Where can I walk?

There are excellent opportunities for walking on many of England’s NNRs.

- For a good hike with stunning views, try the sections of the South West Coast Path running through the Lizard NNR in Cornwall.
- Cavenham Heath NNR in the Brecks, Suffolk, offers woodland, heathland and wetland trails.
- The Hawes Water trail on the Gait Barrows NNR in Silverdale, Lancashire, offers a wheelchair-friendly boardwalk and surfaced path leading to attractive views over the largest natural lake in Lancashire. (Accompaniment by an able-bodied person is advisable.)

For details of these and other walks on NNRs near you visit the NNR pages on our website – [www.english-nature.org.uk/news/events.asp](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/news/events.asp)

The stunning sight at the end of a four-mile evening walk at Gatehampton, on the Oxfordshire side of the Thames at Goring.





## FOCUS ON... Lindisfarne

Imagine, if you can, a place where you can shut yourself off from the rest of the world. An area containing swathes of grasslands, miles of sand dunes, salt marshes and mudflats and an abundance of wildlife throughout the year.



Coves Haven, Lindisfarne NNR

### Four walks to look out for

- 1 The Nature Trail: three miles long, this follows the road to the castle and takes in both coastal and inland areas. Short eared owl and merlin can be seen from autumn onwards as well as lapwing, curlew, dunlin, bar-tailed godwit, wigeon and grey plover.
- 2 Around the Snook – 2 miles: this route, to the west of the main island, allows a superb tour of the margins between the dunes and inter-tidal land. The going is over mostly level compacted sand, firm substrate and the road.
- 3 The Big Bank: the shortest route at 1.5 miles, this offers panoramic views across the dunes and out to the saltmarsh.
- 4 Activity walk for children: English Nature has created a nature trail for children including a map containing eight wooden posts which provide clues for a tour of the island.

### Outdoor Show

To find out more about National Nature Reserves, why not go along to the National Outdoor Show, at Birmingham NEC from Friday, March 18, to Sunday, March 20? English Nature will have a joint stand with the Countryside Agency, Environment Agency, Rural Development Service and Defra where we will focus on Spotlight NNRS. You could be one of the first to get our new booklet showing how to find them and why they are the best wildlife sites to visit.

Head to Lindisfarne NNR in Northumberland and such an environment becomes a reality – but perhaps only for four or five hours each day.

The NNR includes a long stretch of coastline, as well as significant parts of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne itself. The two are connected by a causeway that can be crossed at low tide. “This means the island is cut off twice each day and people visit it for this very reason as it creates a wonderful sense of isolation and tranquillity,” said Phil Davey, Site Manager at Lindisfarne NNR.

He added, “Lindisfarne NNR is a place where land and sea seem to be in a continual struggle, where tidal mudflats, saltmarshes and dunes compete and combine. The result is a unique shelter for visiting birds, and a wonderful botanical environment.”

The wildlife of the reserve is regarded as being of international importance, particularly the birdlife, and Lindisfarne has been designated as a Special Protection Area due to the international importance of the birds that breed, feed and winter there. Winter visitors include ducks, geese, notably the pale-bellied brent geese and waders including bar-tailed godwits and grey plovers. Many birds can be seen in the summer such as little terns, oystercatchers and rock pipits.

During the summer, purple northern marsh orchids, early marsh orchids and marsh helleborines are found at Lindisfarne and rare butterflies including dark green fritillaries and graylings can also be seen. The island's rocky shores, with their pools, provide a home for crabs, limpets, periwinkles, mussels and barnacles. And large numbers of grey seals together with smaller numbers of common seals can also be found around Holy Island on sand banks at low tide.

All visitors should check the tide times before they go and keep an eye on the water level during their visit to Lindisfarne NNR. Car parking is available on the Island, at Budle Bay and at Beal, on the mainland.

Peter Wakely

# Nature and Art

Nature needs people and people need nature. At English Nature we want to increase the opportunities for people to enjoy and experience nature where they live, work and relax in ways that suit them best. We know people are inspired by nature as many of our best-loved works of art capture its incredible beauty and extraordinary power.

Our Arts Programme, on National Nature Reserves, supports projects that bring children and adults together to create works of art reflecting the nature of these very special places. These projects have encouraged community involvement and revealed people's social and creative talents. Most of all, they have provided fun and exciting learning environments.

Sharon Gunn, People and Nature Manager with English Nature, said, “There is strong evidence to show that when people get involved in arts projects they make new friends, feel happier, feel more positive about where they live and learn about other people's cultures.

“Our Arts Programme projects have been simply wonderful. Some of the more transient ones have reflected nature's constant need to change, whereas others have captured the power and persistence of nature. All have evoked strong emotions and a sense of wonder and delight.”

## Project paints a picture of wetland beauty

The Great Fen Project, in which English Nature is a key partner alongside the Environment Agency, Huntingdon District Council and the Wildlife Trust, will connect and protect two globally important fen areas just outside Peterborough in Cambridgeshire. It will restore a significant tract of the Fens, once the country's largest wetlands, forming an inspiring mosaic of open water, reedbeds, grassland and woodland.

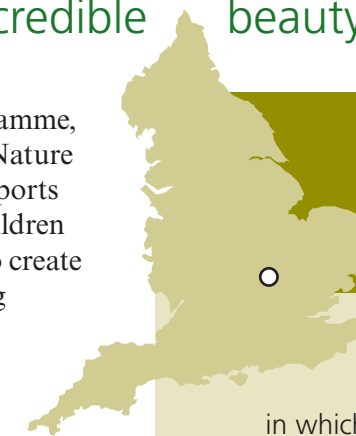
Joining Woodwalton and Holme Fens, and surrounding them with buffer land, the project will create a 3,700 hectare wetland, safeguarding threatened habitats and wildlife. But the purpose of the Great Fen project is not only restoration – it is also the creation of a wonderful place for people to visit and enjoy sightings of rare species including the fen violet, bittern and nightingale, as well as leisure activities such as boating and angling.

Raising public awareness of the initiative and its impact on local life is an important aspect of the Great Fen vision. This year the Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF) will be helping to

promote understanding and appreciation of this fascinating lowland world. ANF is a Dutch-based charity that enables artists from across the world to visit endangered areas and highlight their value through exhibitions, books and other media.

As part of the project, 24 artists from eight countries from Russia to Canada are living and working in the Great Fen, creating a unique record of its wildlife and showing how the landscape will change as the project develops over the next 50 years.

Their work will be shown at venues in the Eastern region as well as in London, and will also appear in a book. Most importantly, the artists will share their enthusiasm with local children who will be the future beneficiaries and supporters of the Great Fen.



Captain T Cockerell/University of Cambridge



Overhead view of Darlow's Farm



# Natural world in Focus



## Canterbury Broad Oak Nature Reserve

Over many centuries the natural world has had a profound effect on art and design. Artists, through their painted landscapes, abstracts, drawings, photographs and sculptures, display an inspiring ability to illustrate the world through a fresh pair of eyes. By doing so, they can help others better appreciate nature and conservation issues.

This was perfectly illustrated at Broad Oak Nature Reserve in Canterbury, where an English Nature-sponsored environmental arts training programme aimed at disadvantaged people proved a resounding success. Angela Molloy and Tracey Falcon were among a number of students from the Kent Institute of Art and Design awarded bursaries through the project to create environmental art.

Their artwork examined conservation, regeneration, decay and growth. Angela said,

“My own piece of work involved winding multicoloured electrical wire around the branches and twigs of a living tree. The sculpture will change over time and, as the tree continues to grow, the wire will slowly constrict it and cut into its bark. I want to illustrate how manmade materials can have an effect on our environment and how we are slowly choking, destroying, manipulating and killing the natural world around us.”

Broad Oak Nature Reserve is surrounded by light industry, including two electricity sub-

stations within the reserve itself. It has a strong industrial legacy and this, together with the surrounding geography of the site, provided the stimulus and context for much of the project.

The project ran a number of nature and art workshops for groups such as special needs teachers from schools in Kent, staff from Canterbury Oak Trust and participants of SureStart, a scheme for economically disadvantaged families with young children.

“Using art as an interpretive medium has proved revolutionary at Canterbury Broad Oak”

Dave Edgar, Reserve Manager at Broad Oak, said, “Using art as an interpretive medium has proved revolutionary at Canterbury Broad Oak. Too often in the past, environmental issues have been poorly communicated and inaccessible to most people. Art, especially sculptures, engages a much broader audience, stimulating interest and provoking questions.”

Artist Angela Molloy



Hazel Hynds

Angela's art shows how manmade materials affect our environment



Hazel Hynds

## Shapwick Giant Project

A giant is asleep with his strange felt shawl swinging on a willow cradle. His 12ft contoured body is made of coiled reeds, his head of rushes and his legs of reed mace. These and other aromatic plants from which he is made have been harvested from Shapwick Heath Nature Reserve in Gloucestershire.



'Noah' is lowered into the peat bog

The giant's shawl has been felted by local people using fleece from English Nature's flock of Shetland sheep that graze the wildflower-rich pasture on the reserve. The felt was made over several weeks at nearby schools and at weekend family workshops. Now completed, the Shapwick Giant, known locally as Noah, will be ritually lowered into the peat bog from where he came...

The Shapwick Giant Community Art Project was part of English Nature's arts programme aimed at involving people and communities with their local NNRs. The project was led by Olivia Keith, Artist in Residence at Shapwick NNR and involved local schools, wildlife groups and other members of the community in arts and crafts activities at the reserve.

The centrepiece was the creation of Noah, whose dimensions were borrowed from those of a fossilised giant excavated from an Irish peat bog in the late 19th century.

Olivia said, “The design of each part of the giant reflects the choices of its maker, the individual strips being a personal record of each participant's exploration and relationship with Shapwick Heath.

“Large numbers of local people and schoolchildren took part in the project and, through this, were able to make stronger links with nature and the reserve”

Fused together, they formed the very fabric of the nature reserve, the intersecting histories of people, plants and animals.”

Phil Holmes, Site Manager at Shapwick, said, “Shapwick Nature

Reserve is already well known in the locality, but what this arts project did was to provide a programme of exciting events from spring to autumn, all involving people. These included sheep shearing, hand felting workshops, making a felt shawl, constructing a giant sculpture and taking part in the Shapwick Giant Event.

“Large numbers of local people and schoolchildren took part in the project and, through this, were able to make stronger links with nature and the reserve. The project was a great success because of the efforts of a talented artist,

support from our partners and the enthusiastic participation of local schoolchildren. The beautiful felt shawl is preserved and displayed, together with original artwork, poems and stories by the children.”

The creation of the giant was the centrepiece of the Shapwick Giant Community Art Project

Hazel Hynds

Hazel Hynds





# Joint working for the countryside

A successful partnership project in the Yorkshire Dales points the way forward for the new Integrated Agency.

**F**armers are extremely busy people, working hard for long hours – and every minute of the day is precious.

In areas of high landscape and nature conservation value they need to be kept abreast of a range of environmental issues to ensure that their land is maintained in the most favourable condition possible. This can mean dealing with several different agencies, a lot of paperwork and, at times, some unnecessary duplication of time and effort for everyone involved.

In the Craven Dales, within the Yorkshire Dales National Park, where much of the land has SSSI designation, a new partnership has been formed to streamline the process.

The Craven Dales Joint Working Project brings together experts from English Nature, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and the Rural Development Service, to provide a joined-up service to farmers who have, or who are developing, agri-environment scheme agreements. The farmers themselves and also the Countryside Agency are represented on a steering group which guides the project.

Each farm is allocated a lead officer from one of the three organisations, as a single point of contact for the farmers when they want advice on Countryside Stewardship and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) schemes or SSSI management on their land.

Jim Caygill from the 'Calendar Girls' village of Rylstone, near Skipton, farms within the Malham / Arncliffe SSSI and has both ESA and Countryside Stewardship agreements on part of his land.

Chris Gomersall



Jim Caygill and his herd of Luining cattle

"Looking after the environment is now an essential part of a changing scene which we all have to adapt to. But time is of the essence for us and it is becoming more and more difficult to find enough hours to work the day and fill in all the necessary paperwork," said Jim, who is chairman of the local Parish Meeting.

"This project has been a tremendous help, as we are now dealing with one person and it avoids the difficulties of having to interpret different guidelines on how the schemes operate. With one person to contact you can develop a good rapport and can generally settle things at one meeting.

"We are all committed to protecting our environment and working in this new way will enable us to achieve the best results."

A joint website has also been set up for the partners' staff so they can share important information about the schemes among themselves.

English Nature's Deputy Team Manager for North and East Yorkshire, Peter Welsh, said, "Everyone is very enthusiastic about the benefits of joint working. It is good for the environment and means a better service for the farmer and more efficient use of our own resources. We have also been able to learn from each other and it has really been an enjoyable experience."

The project, piloted in Malham, will help to develop good practice in joint working between English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service who will be merging to create an Integrated Agency in 2007.

# Will new farm payments work for wildlife?

This month sees the implementation in England of the most radical shake-up in support for farming since the UK joined the European Common Agriculture Policy in 1973.

**O**ut goes the confusing system of support for farm production that has been linked to the environmentally damaging intensification of EU agriculture. In comes the Single Payment Scheme that breaks the link between what farmers produce and the subsidy they receive. But what will this mean for our wildlife?

While there will be less incentive to overstock sensitive upland habitats, we may see the abandonment of grazing altogether on other SSSIs, together with a loss of the vital animal husbandry skills needed. We are advising Defra on appropriate ways of monitoring change.

Shortly after the reforms were agreed in Luxembourg last year, English Nature identified a risk that the new system

could create perverse incentives for landowners to grub up orchards and overgraze woodlands. We worked with Defra to address this risk (see below). We also worked with Defra to make sure the Single Payment is only paid where farmers adhere to a minimum baseline standard of environmental performance, or 'cross compliance'. However, while we are hopeful about the new soil management standards, we are disappointed small fields will be exempted from the requirement for a protective buffer strip around hedges.

In a very welcome move, all farmers who had entered agri-environment management schemes will not lose out financially as a result of the reforms as had been feared. When the Single Payment is calculated, English Nature has ensured that SSSIs managed with assistance from its Wildlife Enhancement Scheme will be treated in an equivalent way to sites receiving European agri-environment support. Farmers with agri-environment scheme agreements, such as Countryside Stewardship, are also protected, although this will be done through a different mechanism.

## Good news for old orchards

Traditional orchards are the most wonderful places. They have immense cultural and landscape importance and are precious for wildlife. They are home to many declining bird species, including tree sparrow and spotted flycatcher and also support scarce insects such as the noble chafer beetle.

The loss of Britain's orchards has been severe in recent decades. Estimates by Common Ground range from a 40 per cent loss in south Buckinghamshire between 1945 and 1975 to a 95 per cent loss in Wiltshire since 1945.

With this in mind, English Nature has welcomed the revision of the Single Farm Payment by Defra that will ensure traditional orchards will qualify for funding next year. Original proposals had left farmers in doubt about future farm subsidies – and some took the precaution to

grub up – or uproot – traditional orchards rather than risk losing out on the payments.

English Nature's Agriculture Policy Officer, Gareth Morgan said, "The cloud that has been hanging over these orchards for some months has been lifted. Traditional orchards are a huge asset for wildlife, and an important feature in local landscapes and economies. These criteria mean there is no need for any traditional orchard owners to grub out their orchard in order to claim this new payment."

The long-term future for traditional orchards, however, rests with finding new markets for their fruit against a trend of increasing standardisation, and the launch and expansion of the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme, which identifies old orchards as a priority habitat for support.

English Nature



Top: noble chafer beetle Bottom: tree sparrow



# Gardening with wildlife in mind



Paul Glendell/English Nature

Blue and great tits on garden feeder

## Things to do in January and February

- If you feed the birds, do so consistently
- Record and report wildlife in your garden. Try the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden BirdWatch ([www.bto.org/gbw](http://www.bto.org/gbw)) or RSPB's ([rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](http://rspb.org.uk/birdwatch)).
- Cut back buddleia to within 5cm–10cm of the old wood to stimulate new growth. Stagger this pruning if you have more than one plant to extend the period that flowers are available for butterflies.
- Sow wildflower seeds in pots outside – many will only germinate after exposure to cold weather. Try cowslips, primroses, oxslips, meadow cranesbill, tufted vetch and bird's foot trefoil.

Paul Glendell/English Nature



## Some facts about gardens

- Gardens make up as much as 25 per cent of the land surface in urban areas.
- There are now more than a million ponds in the country's gardens, two million nest boxes, five million compost heaps and 40 million trees.
- Money spent on bird food has increased 500 per cent in the last 15 years.

Peacock butterfly

Sales of pesticides and herbicides for garden use are still huge. But the real growth area in horticulture these days is in products for those who want to work with nature rather than against it. In the first of a new series, STEVE BERRY looks at this trend and provides some seasonal tips.

**G**ardens are not obvious refuges for wildlife. They are often small, subject to heavy disturbance – especially in warmer weather when much wildlife is most active – and many are regularly doused with chemical poisons of one sort or another. But reducing or eliminating the use of poisons in a garden will have immediate benefits.

The average garden may contain as many as 2,000 animal species, larger gardens two or three times this. Many of these are seen, incorrectly, as pests. Yet in reality most invertebrates have no real effect on garden plants or are beneficial to the gardener – like the ladybirds, hoverflies and lacewings that help reduce the aphid population. Chemical-free gardening allows these useful predators to thrive.

All animals need places to rest, nest, feed and breed. So the

second big step to making your garden more wildlife-friendly is to view it from the perspective of the wildlife you want to attract. What does it offer in terms of food and shelter? Think of providing berry-bearing shrubs and adding features like ponds, compost heaps and woodpiles. Choose nectar-rich plants. Avoid double-flowered and other highly bred, complex varieties that have little to offer bees and butterflies.

English Nature produces a range of leaflets about wildlife in the garden. These can be obtained from the Enquiry Service on 01733 455101 or by emailing [enquiry-service@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:enquiry-service@english-nature.org.uk)

English Nature's CD Gardening with Wildlife in Mind is available at £9.99 (plus £1.50 p&p) from The Plant Press, 10 Market Street, Lewes, BN7 2NB. Call John Stockdale on 01273 476151 or email [john@plantpress.com](mailto:john@plantpress.com)

# A new approach to flood management



John Barrett/English Nature

Moorland grip erosion in the Tees Valley

Sustainable solutions are at the heart of the Government's new strategy for flood management, which sees a shift away from the straightening and deepening of stream and river channels, and a move to working with natural processes.

**T**he Government's consultation, *Making Space for Water*, to be published this year, heralds a new strategy for flood management. Working with natural processes will become part of a more sustainable approach. This means trying to slow down the run-off from increasingly intensive upland land use, blocking up drains and putting the bends back into streams and rivers. Greater use can also be made of farmland in flood plains for the storage of floodwater. A report just published by English Nature and Defra – *Integrated Washland Management for Flood Defence and Biodiversity* – brings together best practice in this area. This can be obtained from the Enquiry Service on 01733 455101 or by emailing [enquiry-service@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:enquiry-service@english-nature.org.uk)

"We're convinced the Government's emphasis on sustainable solutions to flooding based on catchment approaches is the way ahead," said David Withrington, Chair of English Nature's flood management network.

In 2004, a consortium of agencies led by Defra selected the catchment of the Rivers Skell and Laver in North Yorkshire for a pilot project. The objective is to show how

a catchment-based approach, involving changes in land use, can help relieve flooding problems in the city of Ripon. The project is a partnership between the Environment Agency, English Nature and the Forestry Commission and Defra's Rural Development Service. The World Heritage Site of Fountains Abbey and its water gardens lie on the River Skell.

"We will be looking for solutions to problems caused by run-off from moor-gripping, intensive forestry, and arable cultivation in the floodplain, as well as trying to create a more natural channel in Ripon itself," said Andrew Windrum, English Nature's representative on the project steering group. Measures being considered are encouraging the planting of deciduous native trees, blocking strategic moor grips, conversion from arable crops on the valley sides, and removing a large concrete weir in the centre of Ripon.

Water companies working with English Nature in upland catchments have proposed two more large-scale projects in the North. Northumbrian Water is trying to reduce the discolouration of drinking water by addressing the problem of peat

staining at source, which will mean working with landowners to block up moorland drains in Upper Teesdale. "This scheme will help improve the condition of upland wildlife habitats, like wet heath and blanket bog, and reduce the rate of run-off of floodwaters," said John Barrett, English Nature's Local Team Conservation Officer.

United Utilities (UU) is a major landowner of SSSI moorland, stretching from the Lake District in the north to the Peak District in the south. Working with its tenant farmers, RSPB and English Nature, it is developing a multi-objective project designed to secure the long-term quality of water supplies and deliver biodiversity targets. "We see this as a sustainable approach for the future," said Kate Snow, UU's environmental officer, "rather than dealing with problems once they affect the consumer."

The water-pricing settlement agreed in December 2004 by OFWAT for the period 2005–2010 will provide funding for the Northumbrian Water project, and for two catchment areas – Bowland and Southern (including the Peak District) – in the UU project.



## Now is the time for... winter visitors

P N Watts/English Nature

Sue Tranter

Sue Tranter

Sue Tranter

1



### 1. Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

One of the larger members of the thrush family, fieldfares visit these shores between September and April having journeyed from their main breeding grounds in Scandinavia. Hawthorn hedges with berries are a favourite feeding area, and the birds' destination can vary from year to year, Norfolk proving particularly popular. Fieldfares have also been known to breed here at a number of scattered localities, mainly in Scotland.

2



### 2. Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

The unmistakable, enigmatic waxwing is so-called because of the waxy red tips on its secondary flight feathers. In summer, the vast tracts of dense taiga forest in Northern Europe provide a home for the bird. In winter, however, the waxwing feeds on rowanberries or the berries of hawthorns that can be found in warmer climates further south. A rare winter visitor to the British Isles, mainly in the east, the bird has also been sighted further south in Portugal, southern Italy, Greece and Turkey.

3



### 3. Snow bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Aptly named because they breed in the inhospitable Arctic tundra, snow buntings venture farther north than any other land bird, building nests of mosses and sedges on stony beaches and grassy tundras in the Arctic. Yet the winter cold of the arctic kills the grasses and sedges and, when the last of the seeds have been plucked, the birds fly south to find food. Regular visitors have been recorded to the British Isles in the winter months although numbers have declined in recent years.

4



### 4. Shorelark *Eremophila alpestris*

This rare visitor to Britain is distinguished by the yellow and black markings on its face. It favours the shingle beaches and grassland of the coastline, mainly in Eastern England. A shy and unobtrusive bird, the shorelark makes the winter journey here from its homelands in Scandinavia and northern Russia.

## Obituary

### Janet Kear OBE 1933–2004

Janet Kear, an English Nature Council member from 1990 to 1997, died after a short illness on 24 November 2004, aged 71.

Her lifetime contribution to ornithology, nature conservation and to the development of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust was immense.

For English Nature, she chaired the Assessor Panel

of the highly successful Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage project.

She completed her sixth book – *Ducks, Geese and Swans of the World* in her final days.

Janet will be fondly remembered for her wisdom, warm personality, modesty and her intellectual wit. Our deepest sympathies go to her husband, John.