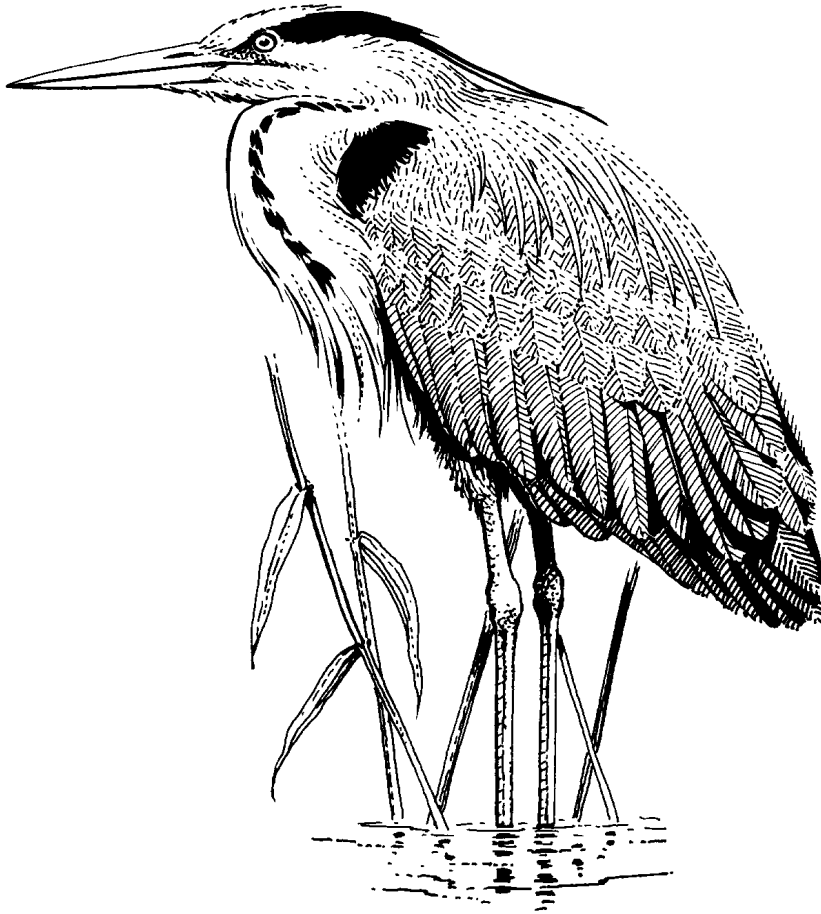


Biodiversity News

www.ukbap.org.uk

Issue 35

June 2006



The Newsletter for Biodiversity
Action Partners

Biodiversity

Hello readers,

Welcome back to Biodiversity News issue 35. Please note this is the last issue that will be published in hard copy. As most of you are aware, Biodiversity News has always been available to view electronically on the UK BAP website (www.ukbap.org.uk). From now on we will send this newsletter to you electronically.

Please ensure you provide your email address so that we can include you on our electronic mailing list.

In this issue, find out how you can volunteer to join Europe's biggest farmer-led bird counting scheme (on page 3) or help with sightings of the elusive Noble Chafer beetle (page 5).

There are even more news publications available in this issue described in pages 8-9 including a new website promoting the best practice for Land Regeneration (Page 9).

Local Biodiversity opens with an article on this years Local Biodiversity Action Plan conference (page 18).

Best wishes,
The Editor

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Once again we wish to thank English Nature & BTCV for the contribution of the line drawings in this Issue.



Note: The Views expressed in *Biodiversity News* are the views of individual contributors and are not necessarily the views of the UKBG or the organisations involved.

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UK BIODIVERSITY



VARIETY OF LIFE

News Updates

Call for Volunteers to Join Europe's Biggest Farmer-led Bird Counting Scheme

The Game Conservancy Trust, a game and wildlife conservation charity is looking for volunteers to carry out bird counts on farmland across the country in spring and autumn in an effort to help restore the wild grey partridge, one of our most threatened birds.

The Game Conservancy Trust manages the National Grey Partridge Count Scheme, which is one of the most successful farmer-led bird monitoring schemes in Europe. But in order to save this rapidly declining game bird, the Trust is eager to encourage more people to count grey partridges.

The wild grey partridge has suffered a massive population decline of more than 85% over the past three decades. Research by the Trust has revealed that a variety of causes have gradually eroded the partridge population, including lack of food, reduction in habitat, predators and weather.

"Establishing a team of bird-watchers to count partridges will make our existing count scheme even more successful and will add to our effort to save

this iconic bird species," explains Dr Nick Sotherton, Director of Research with the Trust. "Our National Count Scheme already receives contributions from more than 1,000 farmers, but on busy estates the partridge counts are sometimes missed. This information is vital. It helps us to form a national picture of the partridge population and this enables us to direct advice and support to areas where the population is still continuing to decline or has disappeared completely," continues Dr Sotherton."



Grey Partridges. Ian Smith

This new initiative by the Trust forms part of a range of measures aimed at changing the fortunes of the wild grey partridge. People interested in participating in the count scheme should contact the Trust, who will

match up volunteers with farmers or landowners who wish to have help counting their partridge populations in spring or autumn.

For further information on The Game Conservancy Trust's National Grey Partridge Count Scheme, or for a grey partridge conservation guide please contact: Neville Kingdon, The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire. SP6 1EF. Telephone: 01425 651066, e-mail: nkingdon@gct.org.uk or visit the Trust's website: www.gct.org.uk/partridge

Helping Hand For Scotland's Golden Eagles

Creating large, open areas of grassland and moor land linked to other large, open areas is key to encouraging golden eagles to live in new native woodland in Scotland, according to a new Information Note published by the Forestry Commission.

The Note, entitled "Golden Eagles and New Native Woodland in Scotland", was written by consultants M. J. McGrady of Natural Research (Projects) of Austria and S. J. Petty of Tighnabruaich, Argyll. It is based on the report of a study entitled "Potential Impacts of New Native Woodland Expansion on Golden Eagles in Scotland", which was commissioned by the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage and the RSPB (SNH commissioned report 018).

The Information Note recommends that land managers keen to encourage golden eagles create open areas of at least 20 hectares and 300 metres wide within the new areas of native woodland. These open areas should be linked by open-ground "corridors" to other equally large open areas nearby.

The reason is that golden eagles' main food species, such as rabbits, mountain hares and grouse, live mostly on open ground, and the open ground needs to be large enough to support a sufficient population of prey animals to support the eagles.

Another important feature of desirable woodland habitat is the presence of

large, widely spaced, open-crowned trees with large branches that can serve as nesting sites, and the Note acknowledges that these are unlikely to be available in a new woodland for at least 80 years. Old Scots pines can make ideal nesting trees, but at present only about 4 per cent of Scotland's golden eagle population of about 425 pairs nests in trees; the remainder prefer crags.

The Note discusses and reviews a wide range of factors affecting golden eagles, as well managing their habitat and relationships with other species. It includes recommendations for managing open ground, activities that are useful in creating new nesting sites, and steps that can be taken to reduce disturbance of nesting eagles.

It provides a basis for helping Forestry Commission Scotland and SNH when they are assessing Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme applications for native woodland expansion to reach the right balance between golden eagle conservation and native woodland expansion.

It can be downloaded as a PDF from www.forestry.gov.uk/publications, or free paper copies can be ordered from Forestry Commission Publications, PO Box 25, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7EW; tel: 0870 121 4180; fax: 0870 121 4181; e-mail: forestry@twoten.press.net

Any Old Fruit Trees?

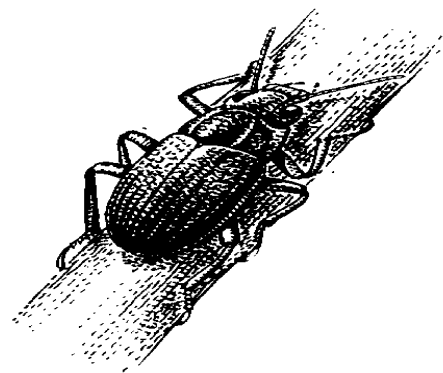


This summer, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) is appealing for owners and managers of orchards and land with old fruit trees in England to contact them as part of their search for the beautiful, but elusive Noble Chafer beetle. Old fruit trees are of key importance to the Noble Chafer beetle, which is one of the UK's most endangered beetles and has declined over the last century, predominantly as a result of loss of habitat. The beetle has very specific environmental requirements, only developing as a larva in decaying orchard trees. PTES is the lead partner for the Biodiversity Action Plan for the beetle and, therefore, is responsible for collating information regarding its whereabouts. As a consequence, PTES is asking for anyone with old fruit trees to notify them, as the trees may be a potential home of the species.

Jill Nelson, Chief Executive of PTES, said "Sadly, numbers of noble chafer have declined dramatically as a result of destruction of the ancient orchards that

are the beetles' natural home. It is vital that we identify areas where these beetles may still be found so that we can assess the true status of the species and where we should focus our conservation efforts. We would be delighted to hear from anyone that has old orchard trees on their property, as they may be unwittingly playing host to this beautiful but beleaguered beetle."

The Trust is asking for members of the public to give details of their orchards and sightings of the beetle, either by email to laura@ptes.org, or by phoning the trust on 020 7498 4533. Identification postcards with full colour photos of the beetle are also available.



COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER NETWORK RENAMED

The Countryside Agency's 'Countryside Character Network' is re-launching as the 'Landscape Character Network' (LCN). The new name will be announced at the network's forthcoming workshop in Oxford on January 31st. The reason behind the name change is to better reflect the broader remit of the network, which aims to promote Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) as a tool for understanding and managing all landscapes, including town and seascapes.

"The Countryside Agency recognises the increasing importance of Landscape Character Assessment as a tool for planning future landscapes," says Rachael Mills, LCN lead and Countryside Officer for the Countryside Agency's LAR division. "The new name clearly identifies the Landscape Character Network as the first port of call for information in this field. We encourage anyone with an interest in landscape to join the network and share their ideas and good practice".

The LCN website has been redesigned to improve its effectiveness for sharing ideas and experience about LCA. The website is home to a wealth of information, including LCA guidance and case studies, topic papers on specific aspects of the approach, workshop proceedings, a discussion forum and the National Database of LCAs, which can be searched to find out about local assessments and their use.



The quarterly network newsletter, "LCN News" has also been re-designed, and now includes comment from leading practitioners and articles on LCA from a European perspective, in addition to the usual news stories and features submitted by network members. Current and back issues of LCN News are available for download on the website.

The network is continuing its programme of topical workshops to discuss wide-ranging issues connected with LCA. The workshops target a cross-section of interested participants and include presentations of case studies by practitioners, as well as open discussion. Upcoming topics for 2006 include 'Landscape Character on the Road' and 'LandscapeCharacter and Renewable Energy'.

For more information visit the LCN website at
<http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk>

New President for Plantlife

With an outstanding record of achievement on rural affairs partnerships and nature conservation issues, Adrian Darby (OBE) has been appointed the new President of Plantlife International, the UK's leading charity dedicated to the conservation of wild plants.

Adrian Darby is currently Chairman of JNCC and has vast experience at both national and international levels. In addition, he is Vice-President of the RSPB, former Chairman of Planta Europa and was Chair of Plantlife from 1994 to 2002. Adrian was awarded an OBE for services to nature conservation in 1996.

Philip Mould OBE, Plantlife's Chairman says 'Adrian will be a tremendous boon to Plantlife. The combination of his in-depth knowledge of our history, his expertise and experience in conservation, and his thoughtful charm and style will be of great benefit to Plantlife and its agenda. We are delighted.'

Adrian Darby was educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford where he read Philosophy, Politics and Economics. After further work in economics at Nuffield College, he became a tutorial fellow at Keble College, Oxford, where he stayed for twenty-two years. He became a council member of the RSPB in 1981, taking the chair in 1986 (retiring 1993). For the period 1997-2001, Adrian was an outside

member of the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency and he also chaired the UK Committee of IUCN from 1996 to 1999. In 1990 he founded the Kemerton Conservation Trust (a charity promoting nature conservation in Hereford, Worcester and Gloucestershire). Adrian's other interests include farming at his 1200-acre estate at Kemerton, near Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire. This farm is managed so as to demonstrate the interaction between nature conservation and farming and is involved in three SSSIs and a Special Area of Conservation, being particularly important for its invertebrates and arable wild flowers.



PLANTLIFE



Adrian Darby, Plantlife.

News Publications

The State of Britain's Larger Moths

A Major New Report from Butterfly Conservation and Rothamsted Research.



This landmark publication for moths provides, for the first time, important new information on trends in this large and diverse group of insects. The results are important because moths and their larvae form an important link in the food-chain for much of our more familiar wildlife, such as birds and bats. Moreover, they indicate likely changes in other less well-studied groups of insects, which form the bulk of our terrestrial biodiversity.

The report summarises Butterfly Conservation's programme to conserve the Priority Moths listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, as well as presenting the first national trends of over 300 widespread moths from the network of light traps run by Rothamsted Research since 1968. This is the longest running most geographically extensive survey of insects anywhere in the world. The full-colour 32 page report is illustrated throughout with high quality images of moths.

As Sir David Attenborough states in his Foreword, the results are significant and worrying.

- 162 moth species became extinct during the twentieth century.
- The total number of moths in Britain declined by over one-third in the last 35 years and numbers in southern Britain by 44%.
- Two-thirds of 'common' larger moth species are declining.
- 71 'common' moths (21% of total) have declined by more than 30% in the last 10 years. This qualifies them as new Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

Butterfly Conservation is extremely concerned about these findings and is taking action now with its conservation partners to help halt and



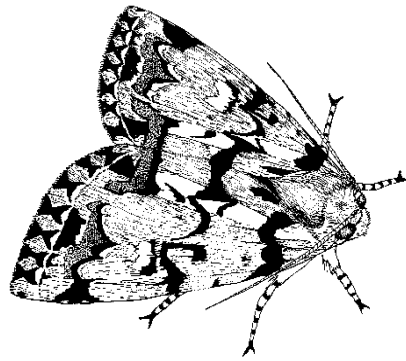
reverse these declines.

Action includes:

Acting as Lead Partner for 52 of the 53 Priority Moths in the UK BAP, with support from English Nature, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, Environment Heritage Service and many other funders.

Proposing 126 species for addition as Priority Species due to their recent decline.

Working with Oxford University on their



research programme to identify the causes of decline of 'common' species and measures needed to reverse them.

Advising on specific measures to help moths and butterflies within the Environmental Stewardship Schemes and its counterparts in Scotland and Wales.

Seeking funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and others to set up a National Moth Recording Scheme to target conservation action and engage the public.

New Website Promotes Best Practice For Land

A new website launched this month marks an important step forward in efforts to convert the United Kingdom's legacy of derelict, contaminated and brownfield land back to usable woodland and green space.

The Forestry Commission, which has developed considerable expertise in regenerating land to woodland and green space over the past 40 years, launched the website to bring together advice on current best practice into a convenient, one-stop-shop package.

Commissioned by Forestry Commission England and drawing on research and development by Forest Research,

the Commission's research and development agency, www.forestry.gov.uk/landregeneration includes 11 Best Practice Guidance Notes. These cover various aspects of land regeneration and the "greening" of urban spaces.

Available in PDF format and downloadable free from the website, the Guidance Notes cover topics ranging from soil sampling and testing to weed control and the use of fertilisers, composts, sewage sludge and native and non-native trees. More Guidance Notes will be added to the suite over the next two to three years.



The Head of Forestry Commission England's Land Regeneration Unit, Chris Robinson, said, "The United Kingdom has an estimated 300,000 hectares (750,000 acres) of contaminated land. Hundreds of thousands of hectares are also lying derelict and unused because of the legacy of previous development on it. For example, it is estimated there are 66,000ha of unused, previously developed land in England alone.

"The presence of damaged and disturbed land is also frequently linked to areas of social deprivation, where unemployment levels are high and environments are poor. Woodland and other greenspace can vastly improve the appearance and perception of an area, which is a key factor in encouraging investment to a region.

"So this is a huge untapped resource

that could be used to establish high-quality green spaces and improve the lives of millions of people.

"Although commissioned by Forestry Commission England, the website has been developed for a UK audience, because Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have a similar need for the expertise that it brings together. We believe it will also be relevant to other countries that face similar issues."

Formerly developed land, especially former industrial land, can be contaminated with chemicals such as heavy metals, arsenic, cyanide, asbestos, PCB/dioxins, herbicides, pesticides, solvents and explosives.

Such land needs phased investigation and appropriate remedial treatment to make it safe for use, to protect local rivers, streams, ponds, lakes and water supplies from pollution, and also, often, to make it fertile enough to grow trees and other vegetation on it.

The site includes protocols for the commissioning of phased investigation to ensure that developers capture a site's opportunities and constraints, including such factors as archaeology and biodiversity.

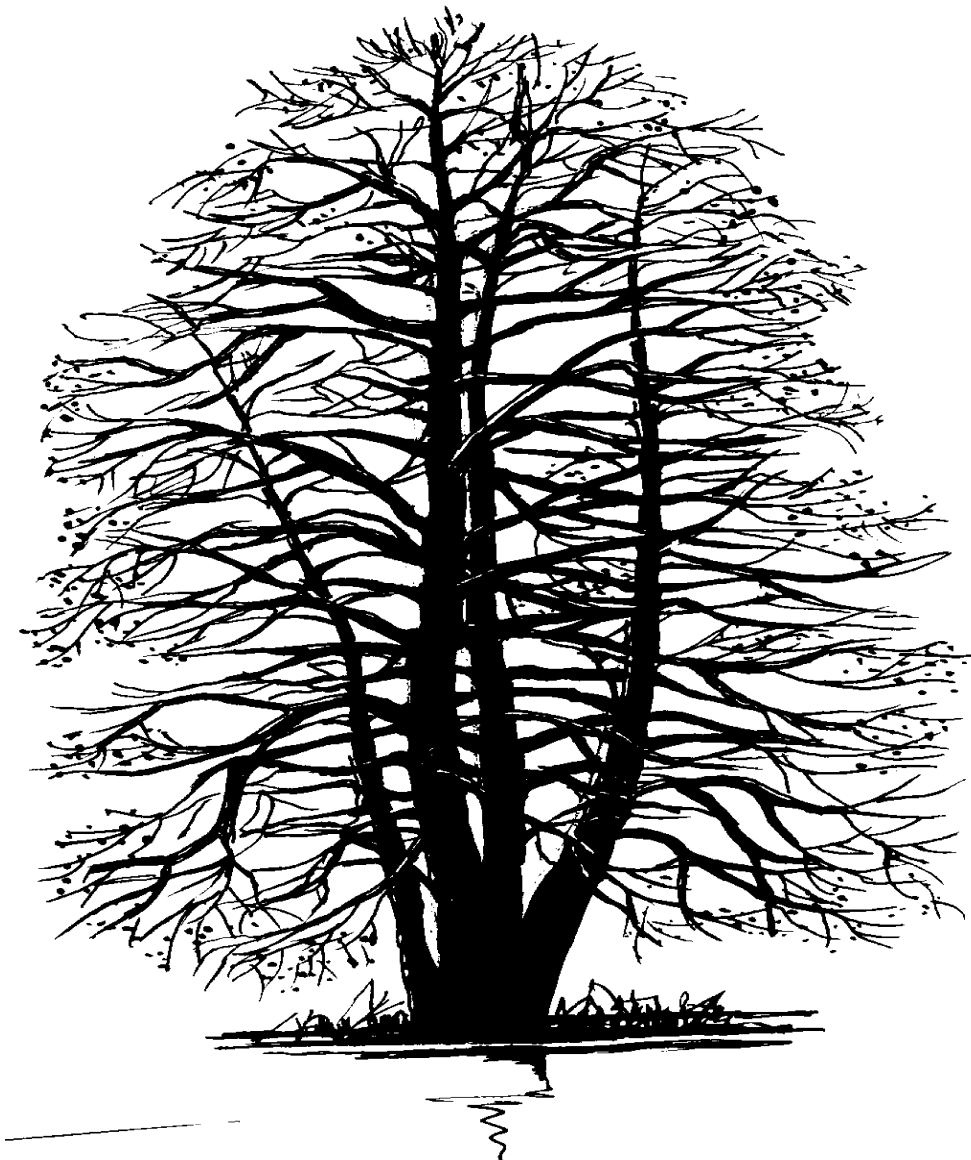
Industries that can leave a legacy of contaminated land include collieries, gas factories, welding workshops, foundries, wood treatment plants, mines, building sites, refineries,

petrol stations, paper mills, textile laundering plants, waste incinerators, ammunition factories and landfills.

The site also promotes the new "roots" decision-support software that was commissioned by Forestry Commission England, with support from a range of other organisations, to provide bespoke specifications for land remediation projects. It is designed to apply best practice to the specification, scheme design and tendering processes involved in the

creation of attractive, sustainable and multi-functional greenspace.

The Guidance Notes are also available as paper packs from Jenny Claridge in Forest Research, 01420 22255; e-mail: jenny.claridge@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Features

Correct Identification Required to Ensure Beneficial Mite Species Survival in Northern Irish Bramley Orchards

Many natural enemies have been utilised, or have the potential to be used, as biological control agents against pests of fruit. Since the reporting of the re-discovery of the predatory mite *Anystis baccharum* within Northern Ireland's Bramley's Seedling apple orchards (Cuthbertson, A.G.S., *Biodiversity News*, **30**:29), it has been reported that apple growers are mis-identifying this beneficial species as the pest fruit tree red spider mite, *Panonychus ulmi*. As a result, some have actively sprayed chemical pesticides against it. In doing so, they not only removed a natural pest control agent which predated red spider mite (and other pest species), but risked their health applying unnecessary chemicals and also wasted money on the applications.

Anystis baccharum is easily spotted on the fruit and foliage of apple trees as it is red/orange in colour, long-legged

and very mobile. Therefore, to the untrained eye it could be mistaken for red spider mite. However, certain characteristics enable it to be identified easily in the field:



The beneficial mite *Anystis baccharum*

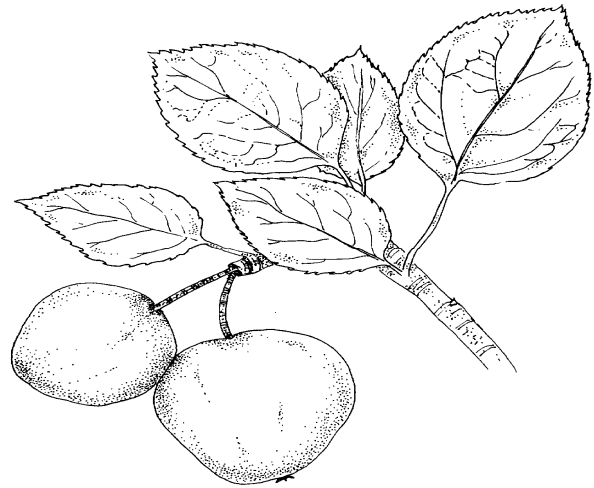
(1) *Anystis baccharum* ranges in size from 1.0-1.5mm in diameter compared to red spider mite which when fully grown is about 0.5mm in diameter.

(2) *Anystis baccharum* moves rapidly over the branches and foliage of the trees, whereas, red spider mite is

relatively sedentary and only found on the under-side of leaves.

(3) Eggs of red spider mite are visible on the branches of trees during the winter months, whereas *A. baccharum* lays eggs under loose bark on the tree trunk or in the soil surrounding the tree base.

Anystis baccharum is the most abundant beneficial species in local apple orchards. It has been shown to feed readily upon and play an active role in controlling economically important invertebrate pest species in the orchards. It may be one of the reasons why current UK economic spray thresholds are of little relevance in local Bramley orchards (Cuthbertson and Murchie, *Biodiversity News*, **32**:19). Therefore, it is essential that Ulster apple growers are encouraged to both recognise and conserve, not only *A. baccharum*, but all predatory fauna within their orchards. Thus, helping to prevent unnecessary pesticide application and move towards a more environmentally sustainable production system, not only for Northern Ireland, but the UK as a whole.



For further information concerning invertebrate biodiversity within Bramley's Seedling apple orchards contact: Dr Andrew G. S. Cuthbertson, Central Science Laboratory, York YO41 1LZ (e-mail: a.cuthbertson@csl.gov.uk) or Dr Archie K. Murchie, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Northern Ireland, Belfast BT9 5PX (e-mail: archie.murchie@dardni.gov.uk).

The Value of the Honey Bee and the Need for it to be Protected

There are estimated to be somewhere in the region of 274,000 colonies of honey bees kept by about 44,000 beekeepers in the UK. Out of this total around 250,000 colonies are managed by 37,000 beekeepers in England and Wales. The remainder are colonies managed by beekeepers in both Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Bees in general make an essential contribution to agriculture and the environment through pollination of many cultivated crops and wild plants as they forage for nectar and pollen, and also in the production of honey and wax.

The honey bee, *Apis mellifera*, a tireless worker in the field, plays a dominant role in this process as the major commercially managed pollinator to provide this service, although bumblebees and solitary bees are also available.

Recent estimates for agricultural and horticultural crops grown commercially in the UK that benefit from bee pollination are in the region of £200m per annum. The value of honey production is often in the range of £20-25m per annum in the UK.



Honey bees as well as being affected by various environmental contaminants and pesticides used in modern farming crop production methods can also be affected by a large range of pests, diseases and parasites.

These are of importance for the health of colonies and also from the point of

view of regulation and the movement of bees in trade around the world. Pests and diseases that can cause high colony losses could create a vacuum of available pollinators for important commercial farm crops. Such a situation happened in California during the spring of 2005 where a dearth of available colonies for pollination of almonds required substantial imports of honey bees from Australia to make up the shortfall.

The bee Health Programme for England and Wales is managed by the National Bee Unit (part of the Central Science Laboratory, a Defra executive science agency). This programme is funded to safeguard the honey bee population due to its importance in the pollination of both commercial crops

and wild plants, and is underpinned by a programme of research and development to provide up to date technical support to beekeepers. The work includes disease and pest diagnosis, development of contingency plans for emerging threats, import risk analysis and consultancy services to both government and industry.

Through increased publicity of the value of the honey bee and continued research into pest and disease control along with a growing public awareness of the detrimental effect of chemical pesticides on non-target species, such as the honey bee and the environment in general, will ensure continued health and protection of the honey bee for generations of bee lovers to come.

For further information concerning the management of honey bees contact: Dr Andrew G. S. Cuthbertson (e-mail: a.cuthbertson@csl.gov.uk) or Mr Mike A. Brown (e-mail: mike.brown@csl.gov.uk) National Bee Unit, Central Science Laboratory, York YO41 1LZ. www.nationalbeeunit.com

The honey bee foraging
for nectar and pollen
(Photos courtesy: Mr
David Crossley, CSL)



Heathland Project Events

The Weald Heathland Initiative organised this national workshop on the Impact of Frequency, Timing and Duration of Grazing on invertebrate populations at Salisbury Plain to present the findings of the Ashdown Forest Invertebrate Survey 2004 and discuss its findings and those of a similar exercise that had been carried out by Defence Estates at Salisbury Plain.

The presentations and comparisons on the work at Ashdown Forest and at Salisbury Plain were followed by three site visits to compare the management regimes of different parts of the ranges. This meeting should result in the formation of a new working group to take this work forward. 24 delegates representing many national agencies attended.

In September, 39 site owners or managers attended the 2005 Weald Heathland Forum Meeting. Last year's main theme was heathland creation with guest speaker Malcolm Ausden, the RSPB's Reserves Ecologist. The morning session also included a short talk about DEFRA's new Environmental Stewardship Scheme and how it relates to heathlands. A local produce lunch was followed by a site visit to the RSPB's Pembury Heath Reserve to see heathland creation in action.

Dr Lee Brady led a course on Reptile Monitoring Techniques, reptile identification, reptile monitoring techniques and the management of habitat to

meet the needs of reptiles. The course, was aimed at advisors, land managers, landowners and enthusiasts. 20 people attended, 10 advisors, including FWAG and DEFRA, 6 rangers from the Forestry Commission, RSPB and Ashdown Forest, 2 enthusiasts and 2 private land owners. Comments from the very positive feedback forms included –“thoroughly enjoyed the course – well worth the drive from Suffolk”, “very engaging” and “excellent”.

Sussex University hosted a course on Implementing Change on Nature Reserves in October 2005. Public opposition to management works on a SSSI and registered common land sites has impeded the work of the Weald Heathland Initiative. This failure to implement the works business plan for the project at Chailey Common has prompted the partnership (in particular English Nature and Ashdown Forest) to seek advice, training and

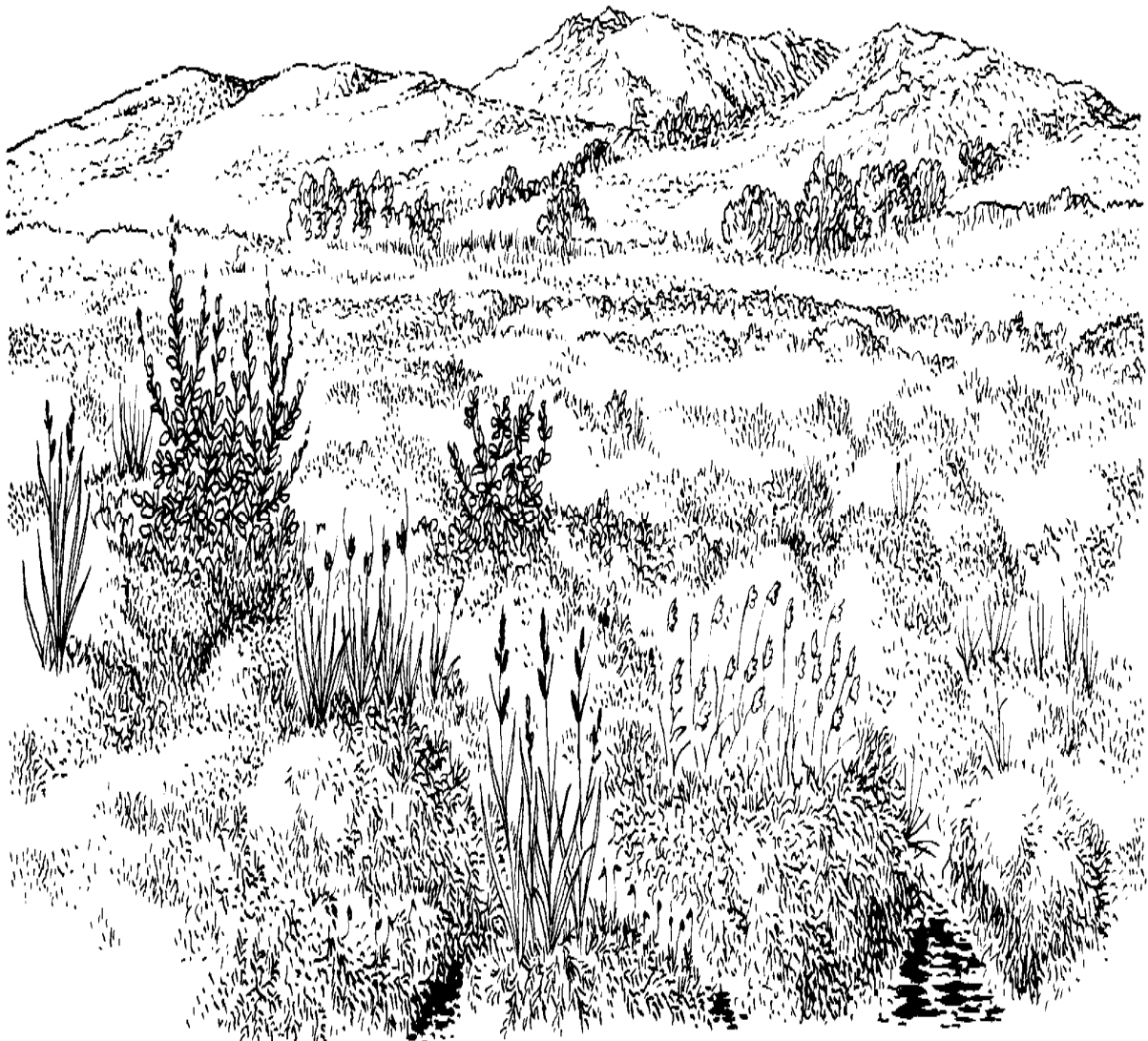


guidance in the processes of stakeholder consultation and conflict management. In the South East, there are many cases of similar entrenched opposition to conservation work on nature reserves or commons; which in some cases has led to the work being

stopped.

Several organizations faced similar problems and it was intended that a training workshop should be offered to a wider audience. Over the 27 and 28 of October Process Consultants led an excellent workshop which was attended by 13 invited delegates from English Nature, Ashdown Forest, Chailey Common and East Sussex

County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust and the Surrey Heathland Project. Judging by the comments on the feedback forms, they all found the two days very relevant, instructive and inspiring: “Fascinating” “Almost looking forward to the next possible conflict situation!”, “Really good to meet people involved in managing commons”.





Local Biodiversity

March 2006 Local Biodiversity Action Plan Conference

Over 120 delegates enjoyed three days of meeting old friends and making new contacts, exchanging ideas and hearing of novel solutions to shared problems, at the March 2006 Local Biodiversity Action Plan Conference in Rotherham.

The conference, sponsored by Defra and organised by English Nature, attracted representatives from over 70 LBAP partnerships across the UK. On the first day we heard about the national policy context, the UK BAP process and up-and-coming issues, as well as a preview of some of the findings of the 2005 Reporting round and the UK BAP Targets Review. There were updates on issues relating to uplands, the coast, grassland, heathlands and lakes. An inspiring presentation from Dr Helen Phillips, Chief Executive of Natural England, rounded off the first day. Helen chose this occasion for her first public presentation in her new role and we were all encouraged to hear that biodiversity will be at the heart of Natural England.

The second and third days each concentrated on a particular set of Habitat Action Plan issues. Day two was dedicated to wetland HAPs. We heard about Reedbeds and Fens with an in depth look at the Great Fen Project, and habitat restoration and crea-

tion in and around Raised Mires. This was followed by an informative visit to Thorne Moors where issues about water control and bog restoration, and site management including involving local communities and volunteers were discussed. On the third day we



Helen Phillips, Chief Executive, admiring a poster about urban biodiversity in Hull. Photo credit to Shona Turnbull

studied Wood Pasture & Parkland, in particular raising awareness of the importance of the habitat and how LBAP partnerships were generating action on the ground. This was followed by a site visit to the National Trust property at Nostell Priory, which is in the middle of a major parkland restoration scheme.

Delegates also worked hard in 5 different workshops on topics that had been suggested by LBAP Coordinators.

These were: motivating business partners; funding issues; LBAP engagement with local process; opportunity mapping; and LBAP reviews. In addition, throughout the conference, members of the BARS team were on hand to demonstrate the system and answer any queries.

Hard work was balanced by fun – an extremely entertaining talk was given by Roger Key on the future of naturalists, and attendance in the bar and swimming pool contributed to “networking”!

Conference Proceedings will be produced by the end of May. Copies will be available from Donna Radley.



Roger Meade, English Nature Senior Peatland Ecologist taking a peat core to find out about the peat left behind, which is the key to successful bog restoration. This photo by Tom Hynes

For further information or if you have any queries you can contact: Donna Radley, England Local & Regional, Biodiversity Coordinator, Email: donna.radley@english-nature.org.uk

A Duck's Delight

Since the invasive pondweed *Crasula helmsii* has been controlled so that it does not cover most of the water, Holmsley Wildlife Reserve has become much better for wildfowl. This winter a good range of ducks have visited including Mallard, Shoveler and especially Teal. On several occasions I have seen over 120 Teal there this winter, the highest count I have made there and possibly the highest ever.

Teal are the smallest of our ducks and although most of them come here from further east in Europe for the winter they also breed here, especially on the bogs of the New Forest. At this time of year they are often to be seen



Record Teal numbers at Holmsley

displaying—the males giving a little whistle as they raise their feathers and fan the butter coloured triangle under the tail.

Males tend to out-number females

here, so the females have lots of partners to choose from. Despite, or perhaps because of this, they seem pretty unimpressed by their potential partners displays. This imbalance is caused because the females tend to migrate further than the drakes, so to the south and west of us there are, eventually, more ducks than drakes.

You can see Teal at lots of sites at the moment, but they will soon be heading off eastwards and once they start to nest they can be very difficult to find.



Hampshire & Isle of Wight

Article written by Bob Chapman.

Heather Returns to May Hill

May Hill is a prominent landmark situated on the Gloucestershire/Herefordshire border. Although formerly thought to have been more of a heath/wet heath, the site is designated as a SSSI on account of its acidic grasslands and small areas of mire.



May Hill ponies. David Armstrong (SW Gloucestershire Properties)

The hill was cultivated during the war and has subsequently been grazed quite heavily by sheep and the occasional pony.

A Nature Conservancy report from the 1950s indicated that there were then no heathers present, however over

the years the odd plant of common heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bell heather *Erica cinerea* has been found protected within gorse bushes, but none in more recent years.

Since the Foot-and-Mouth epidemic the hill has been grazed solely by ponies and the effect has been quite dramatic. Plants are now flowering more profusely, the sward appears to be getting richer, the flushed areas appear to be getting larger and wetter, and common heather has reappeared together with bilberry and is spreading at a promising rate.

Scrapes and seeding have been contemplated over the years to re-establish the heather. However, it now appears that we can hopefully re-establish the control of the grazing, possibly using sheep in moderation in the future.

Devon Shooters Launch Conservation Crusade to Save Water Voles

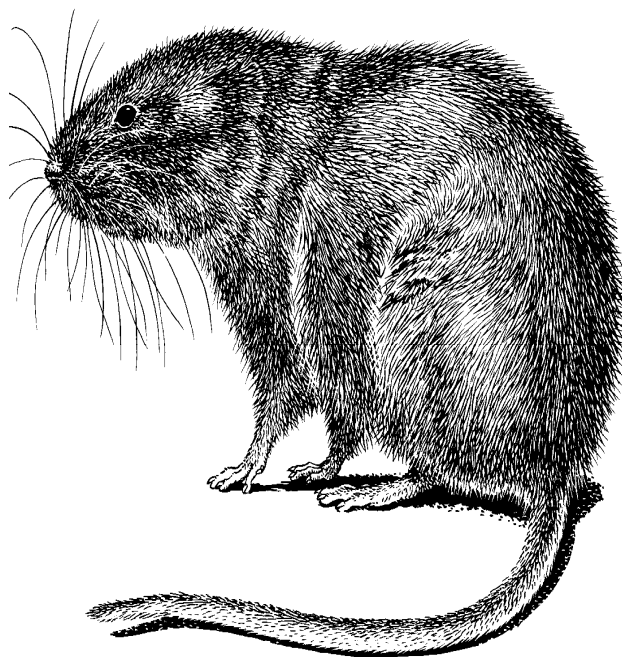
Devon shooters have joined forces with the Environment Agency to launch a conservation crusade to save water voles from extinction.

The initiative, which aims to protect waterside wildlife in the West country, was launched on the marshes of the Exe estuary in January.

BASC's Conservation Officer on the Somerset Levels, Robin Marshall-Ball said: "Water vole numbers have declined over the last 10 years, so it is really important that we work with our partner organizations to reverse this trend. It is fantastic to see the commitment of a wide range of bodies to protect high-risk species, such as the water vole from the mink, a voracious predator which, as an introduced species, has no natural check on its activities."

Water voles can still be found in Somerset and parts of Dorset, but they are now extinct in Cornwall and there is only one small colony known in Devon.

The water vole initiative is part of BASC's Green Shoots programme which is a unique collaboration between people who manage land for shooting and other conservation organizations. It allows access to shooting land for survey and management designed to meet biodiversity targets to improve the range and diversity of plants, animals, birds and insects in the country.



The Peak District Vision for Wildlife Project

The Peak District Vision for Wildlife Project has adopted a new way of tackling biodiversity conservation within the Peak District National Park.

Up until now, pro-active conservation projects carried out by the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) have targeted individual habitats which are in serious decline - hay meadows, lead rakes, ponds, wetlands and ancient woodlands. However the Vision Project takes an area/landscape-based approach. We have used a landscape character assessment alongside an ecological survey to help us target habitat conservation and restoration projects. The area-based approach also allows us to include aims of both supporting and involving the local community.

The Project is based on objectives outlined in the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) of “encouraging a diverse countryside where wildlife is an integral part of the landscape” and allows us to move towards a vision of “a more diverse mosaic of linked habitats ensuring a sound future for those species that depend on a variety of habitats and providing a network of corridors and stepping stones for wildlife.”

The Vision Project area covered some 35 km² within the White Peak, centred on Longstone Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - an area of limestone heath. It extends out over the limestone plateau to a number of limestone dales SSSIs. In 2005, the area extended northwards to include some Dark Peak BAP habitats and includes the moors of Eyam, Offerton and Abney and the surrounding edges, cloughs and valleys. The area is largely owned and managed by private individuals, primarily local farmers.



The project is being run as a partnership between English Nature and the PDNPA with additional funding from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, College of the Peak and local businesses. Partnership is an important element in the project – with landowners, tenants, contractors, local naturalists and local communities all involved.

Local farmers are being encouraged to enter land into local or national agri-environment agreements and local quarry and mining companies are involved in the project through site restoration plans. Conservation and restoration works have been carried out by landowners/managers, directly by PDNPA staff, by local contractors, and by volunteers. Action has included:

- Sowing hay meadow seed to diversity species-poor grasslands. A seed harvester and spreader have been bought by the Project.
- Scrub removal on dalesides.
- Woodland work including the removal of non-native trees and ground flora and harvesting and sowing native seeds for replanting into woodlands.
- Restoration of concrete and clay and stone set dewponds.

The Project has trialled new techniques for the restoration of concrete dewponds and has supported traditional skills in the restoration of clay and stone sett ponds.

- Restoration of wetlands through the creation of depressions, ponds and tree removals.

Raising awareness about the Vision Project has been facilitated through walks, talks, articles in parish magazines, leaflets, activities in schools, attendance at village shows and practical conservation/restoration tasks.

The benefits of the Vision Project's approach are many and various. Amongst the most significant are the opportunities the approach gives for linking and extending existing sites of high wildlife value, and helping to achieve Peak District BAP targets. Feedback from local communities has been extremely positive as people have felt empowered to help their local wildlife and protect their surrounding environment.

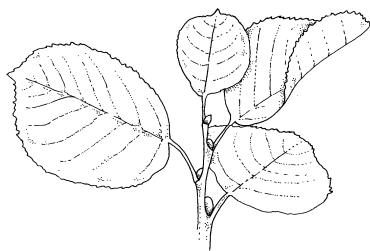
For further information please contact Rebekah Newman or Louise Valentine on 01629 816397 or by email to: Vision.Project@peakdistrict.gov.uk The Vision Project Reports for 2003/04 and 2004/05 are available on the PDNPA's official website which can be found on www.peakdistrict-npa.gov.uk



Restored clay and stone sett dew pond

Traditional Orchards in Norfolk

Traditional orchards can support a rich array of biodiversity, including invertebrates, birds, bryophytes, lichens and grassland flora. They are, however, often overlooked and accorded relatively little attention compared to other habitats. They are also under a high degree of threat. Many orchards are situated on the outskirts of villages and along the urban fringe, and they are, therefore, at particular risk of being cleared to make way for housing and other forms of development.



In an effort to assess the current status of this important habitat in Norfolk the East of England Apples and Orchards Project (EEAOP) and the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership have recently been carrying out a roadside survey of orchards marked on the Millennium Edition Ordnance Survey Explorer map (which uses baseline data from 1992). A wide variety of information is being gathered, including data on tree size, density and form, fruit species, windbreaks and field boundaries, and surrounding land use. Some 313 orchard sites in 68 parishes have been surveyed to date, and the project is now nearing completion.

An analysis report revealed 40% of

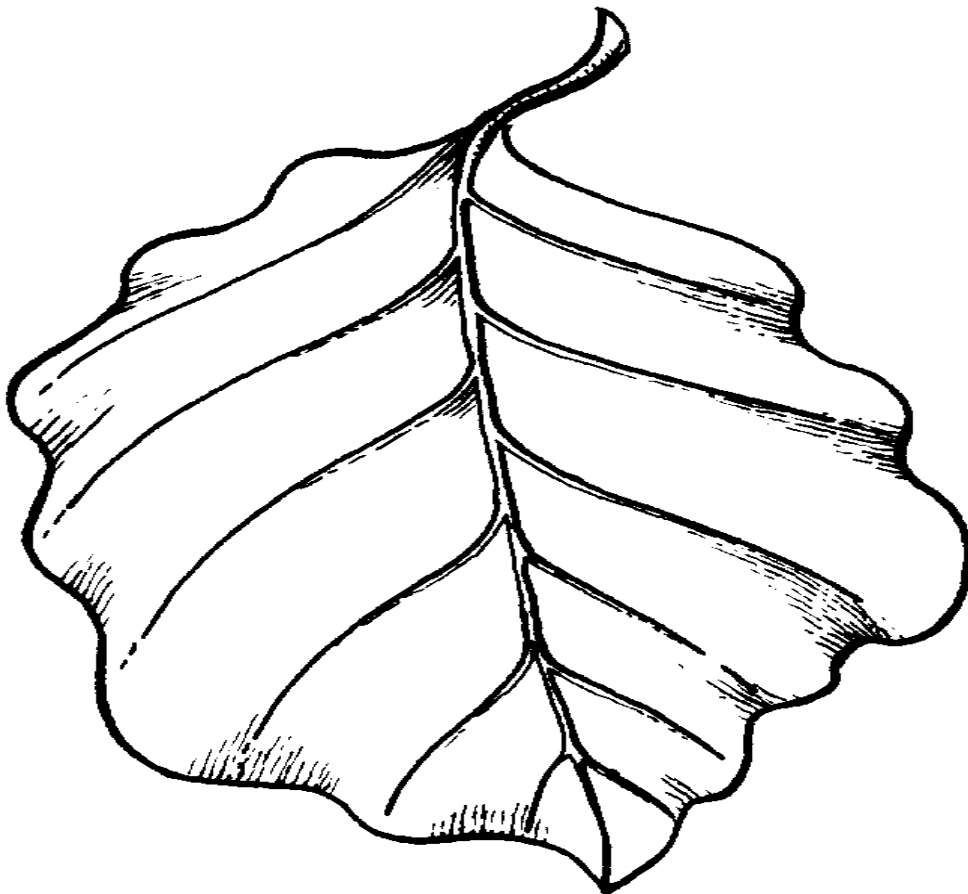
the orchards surveyed had no fruit trees left; of the 150 sizeable orchards, 47 had been reduced in size compared with the mapped area; only 94 sites were identified as containing traditional orchard habitat. These results will require further analysis.

The roadside survey is being complemented by a separate study of the biodiversity of five individual orchards. The Sites have been selected to represent a range of different ecological condition

and management regimes, and are located in the Fens, mid-Norfolk, north Norfolk (two sites) and the south-east corner of the county. This study is also nearing completion, and has provided valuable information about the invertebrates, lichens, bryophytes and diatoms to be found in Norfolk's traditional orchards.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BOTH SURVEYS, PLEASE CONTACT DR GERRY BARNES

(Chair, Norfolk Woodland BAP Topic Group) by emailing gerry.barnes@norfolk.gov.uk



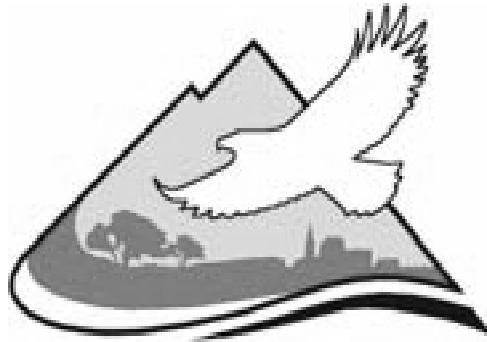


Group Updates

Consultation That Gives Priority to Preserving Key Scottish Species Welcomed

The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) welcomed today's (20 March 2006) publication of Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) consultation document "Making a difference for Scotland's Species: A Framework for Action", as a major step forward in addressing specific and critical threats to native wildlife.

Speaking following the launch SWT's Chief Executive, Simon Milne said *"We know that there are many species such as the red squirrel that desperately need immediate and direct action to prevent their terminal decline. We welcome a framework for this co-ordinated approach to the problem, and look forward to working with SNH and others in its development and implementation. We hope that this commitment to action will be*



SCOTTISH
WILDLIFE TRUST

matched by the appropriate level of funding from the Scottish Executive."

Part of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, the first part of the consultation paper proposes a list of species where focused effort and resources over the next three to five years could make the most difference to biodiversity. Including in this list are; red squirrel, European beaver, the great yellow bumblebee, the small cow wheat, water vole and Scottish wildcat. The framework recognises that while conservation of habitats and functioning ecosystems is normally the right approach, there are occasions where direct intervention is necessary.

As Milne continues, "SWT is very pleased to see that the framework goes beyond producing yet another list of vulnerable species; it includes

proposals to address some of the more challenging conservation management issues such as destructive non-native species, sustainable use of wildlife, conflicts of interest between people and wildlife and reintroductions. It is interesting to see that the European beaver has a place in the key species list. SWT is strongly supportive of a trial re-introduction of the European beaver to Scotland. It was only in September 2005 that the proposal was turned down by the Minister and we are encouraged that there appears to be a renewed commitment to bring back this keystone species.”

More controversial and costly is the

intention to increase action against invasive non-native species such as rhododendron, American mink, giant hogweed, North American signal crayfish, hedgehogs (on the islands) and grey squirrels, all of which threaten biodiversity and need bold national measures to control their spread.

“Invasive non-native species are one of the greatest threats to Scotland’s native wildlife,” said Milne; “they can have a dramatic effect on the natural species balance. This is where direct and coordinated intervention can be most effective.”

THE SEARCH IS ON FOR NORTHERN IRELAND’S ANCIENT WOODS

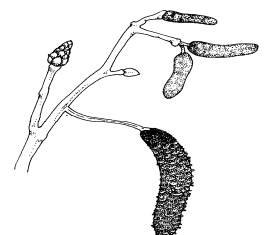
A massive survey of woodland in Northern Ireland is set to take place over the next few months. Thanks to funding from the Environment and Heritage Service and Heritage Lottery Fund, the Woodland Trust is putting the country’s oldest woods under the microscope.

The Woodland Trust, the UK’s leading woodland conservation charity, is compiling the first ever inventory of Northern Ireland’s ancient woodland (woods which have been around for at least 400 years) and hopes to survey over 5,000 hectares of woodland between April and June this year. To achieve

this goal, the Trust is asking for the help of farmers and other landowners.

“We hope that landowners will be able to help by allowing our surveyors access to their woods,” said Sian Thomas, the Trust’s project manager.

“The work will be carried out by qualified ecologists, who will walk through each wood noting down the species of plants and any historical features which could indicate that the wood is ancient.”



The field survey work is backed by detailed historical research, and the Trust is also appealing for historical records. Sian Thomas enthused: "Documents which have been passed down generations, for example old maps, could provide valuable information about the history and age of your local wood. We're interested in records which date back to the 17th or 18th century, or earlier, and would ask anyone with such information to please get in touch."

Ancient woodland is irreplaceable. Having evolved over centuries, it is one of our richest wildlife habitats, home to many threatened and endangered species. The Trust hopes that identification and survey of these woods will lead to improved protection, with the possible provision of grant-aid for ancient woodland owners to assist woodland management.

The inventory will be completed by the end of 2006 and will be available in different formats, catering for a broad range of audiences – from the general public to professionals and academics.



1 Bluebell Glade—June '03. Steven Kind

To find out more about the project please contact Gillian Hunt at the Woodland Trust on 028 9127 5787 or visit www.backonthemap.org.uk

DIARY 2006

October

Communicate 2006 will take place from Thursday 12 - Friday 13 October 2006 at HP Laboratories in Bristol.



www.ukbap.org.uk