



# Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

## Progress summary 2003 - 2004

Over the last year the Partnership has achieved progress in the following areas:

### Facilitating and supporting the implementation of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

- Coastal, Woodland and Large Areas groups have been formed.
- 'On the ground' action has been taking place for all BAP habitats and most BAP species.
- Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Biodiversity has been produced (further details on page 3).

### Improving biodiversity information

- A biodiversity data audit has been undertaken by the Norfolk Biological Records Centre. All available information on BAP species in the county will be provided to partners to help inform conservation and planning decisions.

### Promoting understanding and engagement

- A second annual forum focusing on the concept of Large Areas for People and Wildlife was organised, and attended by over 75 people (further details on page 2).
- Biodiversity conservation has been recognised as a key issue within the County Council, and several district councils' Community Strategies.

### Monitoring and reporting on Norfolk BAP progress

- Norfolk is one of the few county BAPs trialling the new national Biodiversity Action Reporting System (further details on page 3).



## Focus on a BAP Species - Water Vole

Since the 1980s the water vole has undergone one of the most catastrophic declines of a species ever known in the UK. The main reasons for this decline are believed to be twofold, namely habitat fragmentation and population isolation, made worse by predation by a non-native species, the American mink. While a great deal of effort has been put into habitat protection and management for water voles, there has been little targeted control of mink within Norfolk.

The River Wensum Mink Control Project, which started in July 2003, seeks to complement the excellent work which has been done on habitat management within the county by focusing mink control in areas where it can be most beneficial, initially in the River Wensum catchment. It is hoped that this action will help to halt the decline of the water vole in Norfolk, and ultimately lead to a recovery of the population.

The project was initiated by the Waterbodies Topic Group and is co-ordinated by Norfolk County Council in partnership with English Nature, the Environment Agency, King's Lynn Consortium of Internal Drainage Boards, Wensum Valley Project and Norfolk Wildlife Trust, as part of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership.

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## Focus on a habitat - traditional orchards

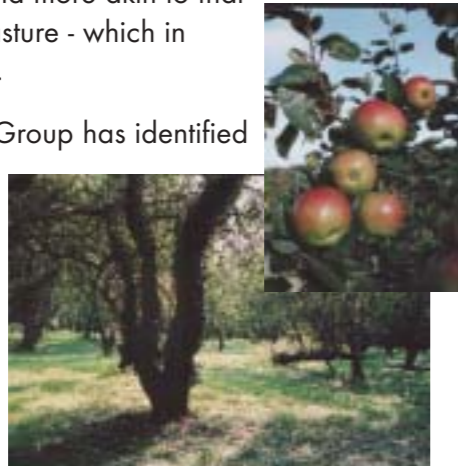
In the last 50 years around 75 per cent of all Norfolk orchards have been grubbed out, with the remainder growing a handful of familiar UK varieties for supermarkets.

More than 250 different varieties of apples, pears, plums, and cherries were grown in East Anglia's 'traditional-style' orchards. Well-spaced, standard and half-standard trees that lived a long time were favoured. These were under-sown with grass, which could be used for grazing livestock, or inter-cropped with flowers and soft fruits.

Today the surviving examples of these traditional fruit orchards are well worth conserving wherever possible. Firstly, because they often contain rare local fruits and add visual interest to the landscape. And secondly, because recent research by the Central Science Laboratory has shown that their biodiversity value is more than double that of modern orchards and more akin to that of traditional wood pasture - which in effect is what they are.

The Woodland Topic Group has identified traditional orchards as a local priority which should be included in the overall Norfolk BAP, and has prepared an action plan for this habitat.

For more information contact Gerry Barnes  
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Photos by Martin Skipper

## Large Areas for People and Wildlife Ecological Networks

At present, with the exception of the Broads, Breckland and the North Norfolk coast, the emphasis of nature conservation has been on protecting small sites of ecological importance. These are often separated by miles of intensively farmed land which results in isolation for certain species leaving them more vulnerable to extinction.

The vision for the future is to identify large areas of land where existing wildlife sites can be expanded and new wildlife habitats created, but which will also be accessible to local people and to visitors. The areas will be linked by 'corridors' enabling wildlife to move within and between the large areas thus helping secure their future survival.

At the Annual Biodiversity Forum in October 2003, over 75 delegates met to discuss this concept of Large Areas for People and Wildlife. The idea generated much discussion and received broad support. Since this time a small implementation group has been formed from members of the Partnership to develop and implement the idea.

For more information contact Reg Land  
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## Focus on a project - Supplementary Planning Guidance

As part of the Biodiversity Partnership councils in Norfolk are encouraging planners and developers to think about how wildlife could fit into and enhance new developments across the county.

All councils already have policies to conserve wild species and habitats but there is no guidance to help them apply those policies to planning applications. Consequently, new **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)** for biodiversity has been drawn up by local planning authorities, English Nature and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

The guidance accepts that there will be development in Norfolk, but aims to ensure that wildlife is considered at an early stage. This will often add to the quality of a development - for example, through new hedges, trees and green open spaces - which can in turn enhance the quality of life for both residents and wildlife species.

A second consultation has just concluded, and a final version is planned for summer 2004.

For more information contact the Biodiversity Co-ordinator.



## Priorities for 2004 - 2005

In the coming year the Partnership will build on the success outlined above, while focusing particularly on the following areas of work:

### Community Strategies and biodiversity

Increase the coverage of biodiversity in district strategies, and work with Local Strategic Partnerships to deliver and report on biodiversity action.

### Large Areas for People and Wildlife

Work with the Regional Biodiversity Forum to develop a regional habitat map which shows the areas of strategic opportunity for habitat creation and enhancement.

### Support and implement projects for species and habitats

Through the Topic Groups identify those species and habitat actions requiring most immediate attention and find resources to assist their implementation.

### Adopt BARS

Work to develop local systems for monitoring and reporting on biodiversity action, compatible with the new national reporting system.



## Biodiversity Action Reporting System

The development of the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) has taken place over the last 24 months, with support from English Nature, the Wales Biodiversity Partnership, the Scottish Executive and Scottish Natural Heritage. BARS is designed to support the full process of action planning from writing a species or habitat action plan, monitoring its implementation through to reporting (both internally and externally).

Norfolk has been one of the trial areas for this new system, and after a few technical hitches we are now beginning to input all of the existing plans onto it. Once the information on targets and actions has been inputted we will be able to extract reports by species, habitat and organisation. This should make monitoring and reporting on progress towards the actions and targets much easier, as each organisation in the Partnership will have a record of their particular actions.

The final version of BARS will be launched nationally later this year, and discussions about how we use the system locally will take place over the coming months.

## Regional roundup

The **East of England Biodiversity Forum (EEBF)**, which meets quarterly, is a liaison body of governmental and non-governmental organisations and Local Biodiversity Partnerships (including Norfolk) that provides a focus for furthering biodiversity conservation in the region.

### So what do the EEBF do?

During 2002 the EEBF commissioned the first **Regional Biodiversity Audit** to improve understanding, and illustrate the extent and distribution, of Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species within the East of England.

This work, along with work undertaken by English

Nature and the Local Biodiversity Partnerships, underpinned the development of Regional Biodiversity Targets for priority habitats in the East of England.

These targets have now been incorporated into the emerging Regional Planning Guidance and the Regional Environment Strategy, launched at County Hall in Norwich last year.

To build on this work the Regional Forum are working on a habitat mapping project, which will identify possible areas where these regional targets may be met, and link with action at the county level.

For more information go to:

[www.eastspace.net/biodiversity](http://www.eastspace.net/biodiversity)



# News from the Topic Groups

## Coastal

This newly formed group have made a great start in reviewing their species and habitat plans, which include saline lagoons and the starlet sea anemone.

## Communities and Nature

This group is working on the development of a new Community Biodiversity Award which will recognise and promote best practice in the nature conservation work undertaken by local people in Norfolk. They are also organising a 'Wild in your Garden' event (see dates opposite).

## Farmland

This group is producing a biodiversity guidance note for farmers and landowners which contains advice on how to make the most of the opportunities to enhance biodiversity within the new agri-environment schemes.

## Heathlands

This year will see the publication of the North Norfolk Heathland Re-creation Strategy, a document which will highlight areas of the county where the heathland BAP targets could be met. The group has written a plan for lowland heathland and acid grassland, which will go out to consultation shortly.

## Large Areas for People and Wildlife - Ecological Networks

The group met to discuss the outcomes of the Annual Forum, fed information into the review of Regional Planning Guidance and is working with the Regional Biodiversity Forum on a habitat-mapping project to identify large areas for habitat creation and enhancement.

## Waterbodies

This group recently received funding to undertake BAP snail surveys, collate information on white-clawed crayfish and also continue and develop the River Wensum mink control project (further details on page 1).

## Wetland

This relatively new group have set a timetable for reviewing and writing their species and habitat plans, and will be working to set priorities and identify projects as this process continues.

## Woodlands

The group has written new plans for traditional orchards, lowland wood pasture and parkland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland. Several events are planned for 2004 (see dates opposite).

# Coming up in 2004...

## Wild in your Garden

29th May - Chapelfield Gardens

## Wild About Norfolk

9th October, Broadland High School, Hoveton

## Apple Days

3rd October - Stow Bardolph  
24th October - Gressenhall

## Wet woodland day

15th July - Ranworth

## Wood pasture day

8th September - Felbrigg

## Websites

### The UK Biodiversity Action Plan

[www.ukbap.org.uk](http://www.ukbap.org.uk)

### Business and Biodiversity Resource Centre

[www.businessandbiodiversity.org](http://www.businessandbiodiversity.org)

### Naturenet

[www.naturenet.net](http://www.naturenet.net)

### Natural History Museum, Exploring Biodiversity

[www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)

### Norfolk Biodiversity

[www.norfolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org)



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## Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

Breckland Council • Broadland District Council • Broads Authority • English Nature • Environment Agency  
Great Yarmouth Borough Council • King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council  
Norfolk Biological Records Centre • Norfolk County Council • Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group  
Norfolk Wildlife Trust • North Norfolk District Council • Norwich City Council • RSPB • South Norfolk Council