



Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

Annual Update 2005/06

Welcome to the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership's Annual Update for 2005/06! This has been an important year for biodiversity, both at a national and county level.

In an especially exciting development, Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS 9) on Biodiversity and Geological Conservation was published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. PPS 9 calls for the protection of existing biodiversity, as well as for its restoration and re-creation. PPS 9 also draws attention to the importance of linking habitats in order to create ecological networks.

The new Environmental Stewardship (ES) schemes and the English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS) were also launched in 2005 and should prove to be powerful mechanisms for delivering biodiversity gains. As of the end of March 2006, 668 entry level ES agreements had been concluded in Norfolk, covering over 56,000 ha; many more agreements are anticipated in the course of the coming year.

In another landmark development, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) bill received royal assent at the end of March 2006. The new act underpins the establishment of Natural England and also places a duty on public authorities to "have regard...to the purpose of conserving biodiversity".

Against this backdrop of national environmental initiatives, the work of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership has continued apace. Action plans for some of the county's most threatened biodiversity have been prepared and are now under active implementation; assessments and surveys of key habitats and species have been undertaken; and biodiversity has been successfully incorporated into a number of Community Strategies and Local

Development Frameworks. Work on the design of an ecological network for Norfolk is nearing

completion, and should provide a long-term vision for habitat conservation and re-creation for the county.

This year has also witnessed an important transition for the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership: in late 2005, Keith McNaught from English Nature announced his decision to step down as the Chair of the Partnership. Keith has guided the work of the Partnership since the launch of the Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan in 1999, and his insight, dedication and eye for detail have been instrumental to the BAP's success.



Richard MacMullen.

Arable field margins such as this are important for biodiversity and should benefit from the new Environmental Stewardship schemes.

In January 2006, the Partnership welcomed its new Chair, Dr Gerry Barnes, Environment Operations Manager at Norfolk County Council. Gerry has worked for nearly 30 years in the field of natural resource management and has a particular interest in the history of the county's hedgerows and woodlands; in this connection, he also serves concurrently as the Chair of the Woodland BAP Topic Group. Gerry's intimate knowledge of Norfolk and his familiarity with the BAP process mean that the Partnership remains in good hands.

Scott Perkin - Biodiversity Co-ordinator

Progress Summary: April 2005 – March 2006

Over the last year, the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership has continued to be involved in a wide variety of activities, designed to:

Improve biodiversity information

- The Partnership has accorded high priority to the development of an ecological network map. This not only identifies Norfolk's core biodiversity areas, but also, strategic areas for habitat enhancement and re-creation.
- Continued emphasis has been given to assessing the status of BAP habitats and species. In 2005/06, assessments and surveys have been carried out on Norfolk's heathlands, fens, traditional orchards, water voles and crayfish.
- Assistance is being provided to the Norfolk Biological Records Centre with the development of a new, ten-year strategic framework. As a first step in this process, a workshop for local recorders was organised with the help of Mott MacDonald, in order to seek the views and input of the recording community.

Promote the integration of biodiversity into key planning processes

- As a result of dialogue with the Norfolk Community Strategic Partnership, a commitment to develop the county's ecological network has been incorporated into the Norfolk Local Area Agreement.
- In collaboration with the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership and South Norfolk District Council, a successful one-day workshop on biodiversity and Local Development Frameworks was held in Long Stratton, involving representatives from all the local authorities in Norfolk.

- Following sustained input to the Norwich Environment Roundtable, a strong biodiversity component has been included in the Norwich Community Strategy.
- Training and awareness sessions on the Norfolk Biodiversity Supplementary Guidance have been provided for parish clerks, planning officers and District Council members.

Promote understanding and engagement

- The 4th Annual Biodiversity Forum was held in September 2005, bringing together over 110 participants from a wide range of organisations.
- A series of articles on biodiversity-related themes was run by 'Your Norfolk', the magazine of Norfolk County Council that is distributed to households throughout the county.
- A biodiversity stand was set up at a variety of public events across the county, including the Norfolk Show, Wild in Your Garden, Wash Week and Wild about Norfolk.
- Several talks and presentations about biodiversity and the BAP process were given to community groups, including the Wymondham Development Partnership and the Pulham Market Society.

Monitor and report on Norfolk BAP progress

- Norfolk's Habitat and Species Action Plans have continued to be entered onto the national web-based reporting system, known as BARS (Biodiversity Action Reporting System); nearly 50 plans have now been uploaded. BARS is accessible via the UK BAP website, at www.ukbap.org.uk

Focus on a BAP Habitat: Wood-Pasture

Wood-pasture can be defined as a land use combining trees and grazing animals (either stock or deer) where:

- The trees are often old and at low density;
- The trees are frequently managed by pollarding;
- The grazing tends to be long and sustained, leading to a different structure and species composition than ungrazed woods on similar soils.

Wood-pasture as we know it today is the product of historic land management, dating back many centuries. Wood-pasture is better represented in lowland Great Britain than elsewhere in Europe, and many areas are of outstanding international significance.

Early maps and documents dating back to the medieval period reveal that significant areas of Norfolk were once under wood-pasture. Although the current extent of this habitat in Norfolk remains uncertain, the county continues to have a rich and diverse array of wood-pasture sites, such as those at Bayfield and Felbrigg. These areas support a wealth of biodiversity, and are particularly important for invertebrates.

However, Norfolk's wood-pasture has been declining for many years and remains under threat. A wide range of factors is contributing to loss and degradation, including:

- Direct loss of the habitat through conversion to other land uses;
- Inappropriate animal stocking densities;
- Unsympathetic tree surgery and the removal of too much deadwood;
- The use of fertilisers, herbicides and insecticides;
- The spread of bracken and other invasive species;

- Fire, often related to excessive bracken;
- Wilful damage to fragile features such as hollow trees.

To help address these concerns, a Lowland Wood-Pasture and Parkland Action Plan for Norfolk was prepared by the Woodland Topic Group in 2004; this is now under active implementation.

For example, a Heritage Tree Survey covering both Norfolk and Suffolk has recently been launched, with the financial support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. A report on the landscape history of heaths and wood-pasture has also recently been prepared by Norfolk County Council and the School of History at the University of East Anglia; this will help to ensure that habitat restoration and re-creation efforts are guided by an understanding of the historical landscape.

For more information about wood-pasture in Norfolk, and to obtain copies of the report on landscape history, please contact:

Dr. Gerry Barnes
Environment Operations Manager
Norfolk County Council

Email: gerry.barnes@norfolk.gov.uk



Veteran tree day at Stradsett

Annual Biodiversity Forum 2005

The 2005 Annual Biodiversity Forum was the largest and most diverse Forum to date. Held on 30 September at Barnham Broom, the Forum brought together some 110 participants from a broad array of organisations.

In addition to an exchange fair highlighting the work of the Biodiversity Partnership's various Topic Groups, two keynote presentations set the tone for the day. The first speaker was Richard Mabey, the well-known author of *Flora Britannica*. The second keynote presentation was delivered by Andrew Watkinson, Professor of Ecology in the Schools of Biological and Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia.

Mr Mabey spoke eloquently about his experiences of purchasing and managing an ancient woodland, and of his efforts to transform the area into a "community wood". The site had not been managed for 50 years, and in his words, he wanted to "let in the light, both physically and metaphorically". However, he also wanted the local community to be an active partner in the design and implementation of the process. By the end of his association with the project, Mr Mabey estimated that over 20 per cent of the entire village of 1,000 people had contributed to the management of the area. Not only had the biodiversity of the wood been significantly enhanced, but also, the wood had become a central feature of village life.

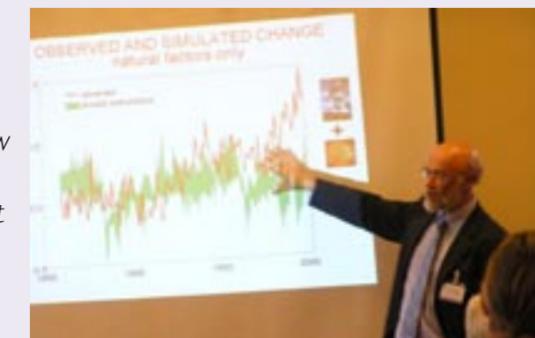
Prof Watkinson spoke about climate change and the implications for Norfolk. He noted that the scientific evidence for global warming is now overwhelming, and is supported by data going back many hundreds

of years. This includes records such as the flowering dates of cherry trees in Japan (which go back 1,300 years) and the leafing dates of oaks in Stratton Strawless (which have been recorded since 1750).

Prof Watkinson stated that temperatures are expected to rise between 2° and 5° C over the next 100 years. As a result, the hot summer of 2003 – which contributed to the deaths of thousands across Europe – will be considered "normal" by 2040 and "cool" by 2060. A sea level rise of 22-82 cm is expected in the East of England. These trends will lead to profound changes in biodiversity and will also have important implications for health, agricultural productivity and the frequency/intensity of extreme events.

Prof Watkinson outlined a number of strategies that could be taken to address these concerns. He emphasised the importance of protecting existing

carbon pools (eg, peatlands), increasing carbon sinks (eg, through afforestation), and reducing sources of greenhouse gases. He also highlighted the need to enable biodiversity to move, through the establishment of corridors, the promotion of habitat mosaics, and the creation of new habitats. However, he noted that many species will probably require translocation, as they will be unable to move through the landscape unaided.



Prof. Andrew Watkinson speaking at the Annual Biodiversity Forum

Focus on a Project: Roadside Survey of Traditional Orchards

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, where they are at particular risk of being cleared to make way for housing and other development.

In an effort to assess the current status of this important habitat in Norfolk, the Biodiversity Partnership and the East of England Apples and Orchards Project (EEAOP) 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). Some 313 orchard sites in 68 parishes have been surveyed to date, and the project is now nearing completion.

A preliminary analysis of the project's initial results has revealed some alarming trends:

- 126 (40 per cent) of the areas surveyed had no fruit trees left, whilst a further 37 sites had only remnant trees;
- Of the 150 sizeable orchards still in existence, 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, and there are several questions about the baseline data that remain to be resolved. Nevertheless, the statistics highlight the rapid loss of this important but often under-valued habitat.

The roadside survey is being complemented by a separate study on the biodiversity value of five representative orchards.

For more information about these surveys, please contact:

Dr. Gerry Barnes
Norfolk County Council
Email: gerry.barnes@norfolk.gov.uk

For more information about EEAOP, please contact:

Martin Skipper
East of England Apples and Orchards Project (EEAOP)
Email: info@applesandorchards.org.uk
Telephone: 01328-701095



An orchard in west Norfolk.



"Five Crowned Pippin", a traditional apple variety recorded from Norfolk c. 1500s. Norfolk has lost over 30 apple varieties, including Colonel Harbord's Pippin, Oxnead Pearmain and Transparent Codlin

Priorities for 2006 –2007

Over the coming year, the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership will seek to build on its successes by:

Improving biodiversity information

- Continuing to strengthen linkages with the Norfolk Biological Records Centre and local recorders.
- Supporting surveys and assessments of a number of high priority BAP habitats and species.

Integrating biodiversity into key planning processes

- Organising a second workshop on Local Development Frameworks and biodiversity.
- Collaborating with Norfolk County Council to organise a workshop on minerals restoration and biodiversity, as a contribution to the new minerals Local Development Framework.
- Continuing to offer talks and training sessions about the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance to local authorities and other interested parties.

Promoting the development of an ecological network for Norfolk

- Finalising, printing and circulating the report and maps of the ecological network project.
- Initiating new projects to begin delivering the ecological network on the ground.
- Working with local authorities and the Norfolk Community Strategic Partnership to develop the ecological network component of the Local Area Agreement.

Using the Biodiversity Action Reporting System

- "Populating" the Biodiversity Action Reporting System with up-to-date information about the implementation of the Habitat and Species Action Plans and progress towards biodiversity targets.

Regional Update – The East of England Biodiversity Forum

The Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership has continued to be actively involved with the East of England Biodiversity Forum. Among its other achievements in 2005/06, the Forum:

- Produced a regional 'biodiversity opportunity map', which identifies strategic opportunities for habitat enhancement, creation and linkage. This was submitted as part of the Forum's response to the Regional Spatial Strategy consultation. The Norfolk ecological network maps have built upon the approach taken by the Forum.
- Through its new Project Assessment Panel, helped to direct some £400,000 of SITA Trust (Landfill Tax) funding to priority biodiversity projects in the region.

The work of the Forum has recently received a substantial boost through the appointment of a full-time Regional Biodiversity Co-ordinator, Catherine Weightman. Based at the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) in Cambridge, Catherine seeks to promote the incorporation of biodiversity into regional policies and plans, and also acts as a key point of contact and information exchange for local biodiversity co-ordinators throughout the region.

For more information about the East of England Biodiversity Forum, please visit: www.eastspace.net/biodiversity.



Greater water parsnip – one of the species being addressed by the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership.

News from the BAP Topic Groups

Eight Topic Groups have been established under the auspices of the Biodiversity Partnership. These groups play a central role in developing and taking forward the Habitat and Species Action Plans, and together, form the “engine” which drives the implementation of the Norfolk BAP. Highlights from the Topic Groups in 2005/06 included the following:

Coastal (Chair: Peter Lambley, English Nature)

Amongst other achievements, the Coastal Topic Group has finalised action plans for three important Norfolk habitats: saline lagoons; littoral chalk; and maritime cliffs and slopes. Key points from these plans – such as the need to promote natural coastal processes – will be fed into the preparation of Shoreline Management Plans and Local Development Frameworks. Membership of the Topic Group has also been expanded to include representatives from major coastal stakeholders, including North Norfolk District Council, the Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk, the Norfolk Coast Partnership and Eastern Sea Fisheries.

Communities and Nature (Co-Chairs: Matt Davies, Norwich Fringe Project and Helen Ward, English Nature)

The members of this group once again played a central role in organising “Wild in your Garden”, which was held in Norwich in May 2005. As in previous years, the event highlighted the important contribution that urban gardens can make to biodiversity. Despite inclement weather, several hundred people turned out to enjoy the exhibitions, talks, slide shows and activities. The group also re-launched its Community Awards Scheme, designed to recognise outstanding conservation work in the county.

Farmland (Chair: Rob Lucking, RSPB)

This year saw the formation of the “Practitioners’ Forum”, which is envisioned to be an informal group in which practical experiences of integrating farming and biodiversity can be exchanged amongst the farming community. The Forum had its inaugural session at Raveningham Estate, and included a farm walk to look at the many different approaches that have been taken by the estate to encourage and enhance biodiversity. Substantive headway has also been made on the group’s many different action plans; five existing plans have been revised and updated, and three new plans for farmland birds (tree sparrow, corn bunting and turtle dove) have been completed.

Heathlands (Chair: Heidi Thompson, Norfolk County Council)

The Heathland Action Plan has been fully revised and re-written, and now provides an up-to-date framework for the group’s activities. Other achievements have included the near completion of the desk-top assessment of heathland County Wildlife Sites and the successful re-launch of the Heaths Forum for heathland managers; the latter event took place at WBB’s Leziat quarries, and included a visit to their extensive heathland re-creation site. In collaboration with Butterfly Conservation, arrangements have been finalised to translocate a small number of silver-studded blue butterflies in the summer of 2006, to a heathland site in Broadland.

Ecological Networks (Chair: Reg Land, Norfolk Wildlife Trust)

Significant progress has been made on the ecological networks project started at the beginning of 2005. As a first step, an advocacy and information document about ecological networks has been produced; this report, entitled ‘Making Space for Wildlife and People’, has now been sent to planning officers throughout the county and is also available on the Norfolk biodiversity website (www.norfolkbiodiversity.org). In consultation with the other Topic Groups, indicative maps of proposed ecological networks for a range of priority habitats have also been prepared; these identify core areas where existing biodiversity needs to be conserved, as well as key areas for habitat enhancement and re-creation. These will be sent to planning officers for possible inclusion in Local Development Frameworks and other policies.

Waterbodies (Chair: Rob Dryden, Environment Agency)

The successful Wensum mink management project has now entered its second phase and has been extended into the Nar Valley; surveys and anecdotal evidence indicate that water vole populations are now beginning to recover in those areas where mink numbers have been reduced. In order to build on these achievements, a second mink initiative is shortly to be launched in the Broads Authority area, drawing upon the lessons and experience gained to date. The Waterbodies Topic Group has also been involved in a number of surveys of BAP species, including water vole, crayfish and greater water parsnip.

Wetlands (Chair: Julia Masson, Broads Authority)

This Topic Group revised and updated the Habitat Action Plans for coastal grazing marsh, reedbed and fen. The feasibility study on solutions to the ochre and salinity problems in the Brograve catchment was completed and generated important new information for the future management of Horsey Mere and its surroundings; this study was commissioned by the Internal Drainage Board and part-funded by the Biodiversity Partnership. Members of the Wetland Group also participated in an innovative study designed to promote the incorporation of biodiversity considerations into the Broads Flood Alleviation Programme.

Woodlands (Chair: Gerry Barnes, Norfolk County Council)

Recently launched activities include: a Heritage Tree Project, in partnership with Suffolk County Council; an initiative to propagate traditional Norfolk apple varieties, in collaboration with EEAOP; a project to survey and re-create wet woodland and other wet habitats in the Wensum Valley; and a survey of native black poplar (a BAP species). The Topic Group was instrumental in having a Tree Preservation Order placed on the only known tree to support orange-fruited elm lichen in the county. Members of the group have also assisted with the establishment of Anglian Woodfuels and helped to organise 12 training events over the course of the year, dealing with a variety of woodland themes.



Corn bunting: An action plan for this BAP species has recently been finalised by the Farmland Topic Group.

Coming up in 2006

BBC Springwatch

4 June, Whitlingham Country Park

Heritage Tree Event

17 June, Ickworth

UK Biodiversity Partnership Annual Conference

20-21 June, Belfast

Not Just Newts! A conference to explore the contributions the mineral industry can make to biodiversity

21 June, Barnham Broom Country Club

Community Woodland Training

22 June, Kenninghall

Community Woodland Mid-Summer Celebration

24 June, Kenninghall

Local Development Frameworks and Biodiversity

28 June, Long Stratton

Wash Week

5-13 August (many different events, at localities around the Wash)

Norfolk Biodiversity Forum

28 September, Norwich

Wild about Norfolk

9-10 September, Norwich

Woodland Fair

30 September-1 October, Suffolk

Apple Day

22 October, Gressenhall

Scott Perkin

Biodiversity Co-ordinator
Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership
c/o Planning and Transportation Dept
Norfolk County Council
Norwich NR1 2SG

Email: scott.perkin@norfolk.gov.uk

Tel: 01603-222112

Website: www.norfolkbiodiversity.org

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- Breckland Council
- English Nature
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Norfolk County Council
- North Norfolk District Council
- Norwich City Council
- South Norfolk Council



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Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group

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Forestry Commission • 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