the Biologue

Essex Biodiversity Project ...working for a better quality of life

The quarterly newsletter of the **Essex Biodiversity Project** Spring 2009

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Essex Biodiversity Project

Work continues on **rewriting the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan**. We are identifying a baseline for each habitat and species plan – and producing 'smart' targets and objectives which can be costed. This new plan will take our ambitions to rebuild biodiversity in Essex forward for the next 10 year period.

Essex Biodiversity Project with EWT have put in a **bid to the 'million ponds project'** for restoration of wet grassland interest to support breeding waders and water voles on a coastal grazing marsh on the River Crouch. This has been favourably received and we are meeting funders on site at the end of the month.

Essex Biodiversity Project has totalled **63 volunteer days** this year to date including a work party of 6th form students from Felstead School led by John Oakshat at Layer Breton heath clearing encroaching birch saplings from an area of acid grassland. **A big thank you to our regular volunteers** in the office Jude Merchant, Michelle Knight, and just joined us, Tony Moreton who has been updating and refreshing the Essex Biodiversity Project website

Rebecca Banks, Biodiversity Project Officer 01621862981, rebeccab@essexwt.org.uk has undertaken **35 advisory visits and site meetings** with public bodies, landowners and individuals this year to date.

Local BAP forums and groups across Essex are thriving and Essex Biodiversity Project is participating in most of them, including **Epping Forest, Basildon, Chelmsford, Harlow, Thurrock and Uttlesford**. These are the groups where project ideas can be formed and discussed, by the people who know their patch. A number of these groups have been identifying project opportunities, developing and inputting into the county wide Living Landscapes initiative and supplying information about Local Wildlife Sites (LoWs).

Maldon District Council have been consulting stakeholders on their **Local Development Framework (LDF).** Essex Biodiversity Project is pleased to participate in the Natural and Built Heritage working group of this process.

We have been making preparations for **Essex Biodiversity Project celebration event** will be held on **Friday 3rd July 2009** at the Essex Records Office in Chelmsford. The theme of the day will be the Essex 'Living Landscapes' presented to an audience of c.200 invitees including senior Essex politicians and decision makers. The full agenda will also include the launch of the newly revised and costed Essex BAP and the presentation of the award to the winner of Essex Biodiversity Project's

Quality of Life Award. Please note the date in your diaries and I will keep everyone informed as we organise the day in more detail.

The **Essex County Council rangers** group has changed their name to the **Biodiversity Management group** which reflects the emphasis of the work they are doing to enhance species, habitats and introducing visitors to their natural heritage in the Country Parks. The Essex Biodiversity Project is keen to support rangers and others staff in their work to enhance the biodiversity value of the ECC Country park network.

We have updated our **Hare today – gone tomorrow** survey and information leaflet after being contacted by **PC Andrew Long, the Wildlife Crime Co-ordinator for Essex Police**. He is keen to use them in his work to combat illegal hare coursing and support landowners and farmers.

Essex Biodiversity Project joined the **Environment Agency Shoreline Management Plan consultation** meeting with a number of colleagues from Natural England, RSPB and Essex Wildlife Trust and a number of major coastal landowners to input our views and expertise into this important process.

Essex Biodiversity Project has contacted **82 Parish Councils** across 19 Living Landscape areas to offer project management support and expertise in taking forward any biodiversity enhancement ideas they may have for land under parish council control, including LoWs - and in doing so, inform them of and support them in delivering their obligations as public bodies under the **NERC Act.** We have also used this mailing as an opportunity to **raise awareness of** their inclusion within a **'Living Landscape'** area and making the link with them as an introduction to producing a future vision statement with their input.

Thank you again to **our key funders Essex County Council, Essex Wildlife Trust and Natural England** and our other supporters. As we all know these are challenging financial times for businesses and local authorities and so we are especially grateful to **Essex & Suffolk Water, John Laing and Thurrock Council** who appreciate the worth of their participation and value it represents.
We have been getting invoices out to our funders at the beginning of the new financial year and trying again to persuade those few local authorities that are not yet partners to join us.

Working with the **Forestry Commission** we have identified a series of additional **'woodland clusters'** in Essex. These are areas in which woodland or woodland mosaic LoWs will receive additional grant aid under EWGS. This is a welcome and timely initiative - in addition to supporting National Indictor 197 it supports the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan and Living Landscapes in the county.

Cetacean survey cards have been posted out to 130 marinas, chandlers, fishing clubs, yacht clubs etc in Essex. This is now a joint project with Suffolk and Norfolk and completed survey cards are returned directly to Seawatch who maintain a national database of sightings and strandings records. At the end of the year Essex records are collated and returned to us.

We have been successful in a joint bid with Suffolk and Norfolk for **regional Environment Agency funding** to produce a **Marine BAP** covering the various marine BAP species and habitats identified along the coasts of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. The idea is to produce one grouped plan for marine mammals and one for marine fish (to cover the large number that were identified in **'Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006)** - Habitats and species of principal importance in England'). The writing of the plans will be led by the **marine expert Jean-Luc Solandt** and we are confident that the timing of these plans should dovetail nicely into the resulting actions from the new **Marine and Coastal Access Bill**.

We have taken delivery of **400 dormouse boxes** made by trainees at HMP Chelmsford. These will go out to support the monitoring effort on a number of key sites managed by partners Basildon DC, Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex & Suffolk Water.

Since Christmas **20 barn owl boxes** also made at HMP Chelmsford have been given out to landowners on suitable sites across Essex.

Following a successful bid for **Natural England funding**, our Biodiversity Project Officer – Rebecca Banks has been spending the money.
Working with Jordan Thomas of **CountryCare Epping Forest DC** clearing and scraping to restore an area of **lowland heath at Chigwell Row**. Previous work on the site has paid dividends with the return of lousewort and petty whin and this work further extends and safeguards the site.
At **Layer Breton heath** additional tree clearance and stumpgrinding has been progressing to maintain the heath and invertebrate interest on this important and extensive LoWs.
The funding has also supported the construction of a number of **stag beetle 'pyramids'** in the Colchester area and associated **educational activity days** delivered by the Schools Outreach staff, Laura Harvey and Roz Wisnieski of EWT

The **Essex Biodiversity Project Strategic Plan 2009- 2014** 'To rebuild Biodiversity and engage people with their environment' has been updated and refreshed and is now available to view on our website www.essexbiodiversity.org.uk

Stefanie Buell - EWT Records Officer (in addition to the ANGSt work – see below) has been successful in winning **National Defra Innovation Biodiversity funding** for digitising Essex coleopteran (beetle) records and developing a data transfer tool, work which will support the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan, **BRIE (Biological Records in Essex)** and the work of many partners.

Taking on the Living Landscapes initiative **Lucinda Butcher is now in post as the Living Landscapes Coordinator** at Essex Wildlife Trust – contact her on 01621 862976, lucindab@essexwt.org.uk – good luck

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Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision in Essex

The East of England Biodiversity Delivery Plan aims to make biodiversity physically and intellectually accessible for people and intends to push for compliance with the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt). In order to do this, a baseline of how ANGSt are being met is required.

This project funded by Natural England will analyse the provision of accessible natural greenspace in Essex as a pilot to inform a future regional analysis. The analysis will be carried out using GIS. The resulting data will be made available to local authorities and will be published in a report.

Local Indicator 10.1 Living Landscapes in the Essex Local Area Agreement will be a receptor for the results of the ANGSt analysis, and the data will also be fed into the relevant Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) to inform decision-making within Essex.

Stefanie Buell
Essex Wildlife Trust Biological Records Officer

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Oh deer! and their implications for Biodiversity

Introduction: There are more deer and more species of deer in Britain today than there have been in the last 1,000 years. They are the largest land mammal in Britain and together these factors mean that deer grazing and browsing activities may have a significant impact on the vegetation in their chosen habitat. After Scotland, where red deer are the major species, East Anglia has the greatest deer population in England, and this article describes the current situation in this region.
More research has been carried out on deer impact and activity in this region than any other, partly because there are five species (Fallow, Muntjac, Roe, Red, and Chinese Water Deer), and also because the habitat of open arable fields interspersed with small coppice woodlands and occasional large forests presents ideal habitat.
This article briefly explores the current status of deer in the region, the conservation issues their high population causes, and the role of the Deer Initiative in achieving balanced deer populations.
Status of Deer in the East of England: Deer numbers of all species in the East of England have been gradually increasing in number and range over the past 50 years. Of particular note has been the rapid expansion of the muntjac, this small deer has adapted incredibly well to the rich varied habitat of the

region, especially the great number of small herb rich Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands the region has to offer. Over the past 10 years we have also seen a large increase in the number of peri-urban deer, (those deer living in the urban fringe). Fallow deer numbers have also increased in range and number, with a number of "hotspots" developing; increasingly these hotspots are associated with an increase in woodland impacts, agricultural impacts and Deer Vehicle Collisions. Hotspots include Hatfield Forest, South Suffolk, (Long Melford to Clare), Epping and Brentwood/ Writtle.

Implications for biodiversity: Large numbers of deer have a significant impact on woodland biodiversity, details of which are well recorded in the literature. The effects result from their often intensive grazing of woodland flora (Fallow deer and Muntjac) and browsing of woody shoots (Red, Muntjac and Roe). Through the loss of certain species and structure deer can have a direct impact on other species. Good examples of this include the Oxlip where fallow deer eat flowers and leaves. The loss of leaves results in smaller plants that fail to flower and ultimately in reduced populations of the plant. Muntjac also eat oxlips, but browse the flowers only. The oxlip is a county BAP species, so the net result is a loss of biodiversity. A similar effect occurs on other woodland plant species such as Bluebell, Dog's Mercury, Red Campion, and Wood Anemone. The loss or reduction in population size of these species results in a loss of biodiversity.

Browsing activity by deer on tree seedlings and coppice re-growth directly, reduces natural regeneration and coppice re-growth. At worst natural regeneration of trees is stopped, and precious ancient coppice stools are killed.

Another effect of deer browsing is the loss of the low thick under-story so typical of coppice woodland, and much favoured as nesting sites by migrant and resident bird species. This has led to significant reductions in numbers of important BAP species such as Nightingales and Song Thrushes. In addition habitat for dormice can be reduced.

Some species benefit from the activities of deer. The best examples occur on the heaths of Dorset, where Sika Deer are present in large numbers. As a part of their behaviour the deer scrape the light sandy soils with their antlers, creating an ideal micro-habitat for other BAP species such as the Sand Lizard and Smooth Snake. Despite these benefits, however, high deer populations result in a net loss of biodiversity.

Possible solutions: So what actions will reduce deer activity, or mitigate the damage they cause? Before any practical action is taken, surveys of deer activity and damage are essential. Systems are available that enable recorders to assess these factors. Data from records of this sort should be closely monitored before during and after management, in order to inform those implementing control measures.

Fencing can be an effective deterrent, but it is expensive. It includes 7ft high deer fencing with tanalised posts which requires 12 monthly inspections. Electric fencing is an option but is ineffective on Roe deer. Where fencing is used for a limited period and then moved, chestnut paling or plastic mesh has proven effective, but of course as soon as the fencing is removed deer have access to the sensitive flora.

Dead hedges made from the waste brash arising during coppicing can be used within the wood, but Muntjac get through them in the first or second year and by year three these fences collapse and offer no protection. Piling brash on individual stools is ineffective. And, of course fencing only moves the

deer on to another site – it fails to control deer at a landscape scale or to prevent the problem from worsening across a region.
Considerable store was set on the use of contraceptive darts, but in practice they have proved too difficult to use; nobody has made the system work effectively. Most conservation organisations now resort to humane culling, but as is evident from the numbers of deer in the region, this is a considerable task. To stop deer numbers from increasing out of control, a cull of circa 25 to30% of the herd per annum is required and to achieve this requires full-time professional or fully committed recreational stalkers and a market for venison. This is already in place on Forestry Commission (FC) land in Thetford forest.
The FC (grants and regulation) also have an important role to play in the effective application of grants. For example grants for coppicing must be linked to the application of sound deer management plans. Without this more woods will be irreparably damaged than will be conserved.

The Role of The Deer Initiative: The Deer Initiative is a broad partnership of statutory, voluntary and private interests dedicated to "ensuring a sustainable well managed wild deer population in England and Wales" The Partners abide by the principles of the Deer Accord and encourage others to share their commitment and priorities as an integral part of their management of deer.

The Deer Initiative promotes:

A sustainable and balanced population of wild deer

A humane, responsible and sensitive approach to the management of wild deer

An experienced and knowledgeable capability in deer management

An informed public understanding of deer management

A partnership approach to reducing the adverse environmental and economic impact of wild deer

Through a coordinated approach the Deer Initiative works with landowners and managers to establish landowner objectives for the areas that the deer are found, and then in conjunction with local deer managers the sustainable management of the deer population is encouraged to meet the landholder's objectives. Deer Initiative staff will aid landowners in monitoring culls and impacts to habitats, and continue to work with representative deer managers to ensure that deer are managed in a sustainable manner for the future.

Further reading on the subject:

Tabor, R The effects of muntjac deer and fallow deer on the oxlip. **Deer** Vol .11 No1 1999

Tabor, R Assessing deer activity and damage in woodlands**. Deer** Vol 13 No 1 2004

Gill, R.A & Fuller R J The effects of deer browsing on woodland structure and songbirds in lowland Britain. **Ibis**149 (suppl 2) 2007

Cooke AS Signs of ground flora recovering in Monk's wood in response to deer management. **Forestry**, 74 2001

Cooke AS The effects of grazing by muntjac on bluebells and a field technique for assessing feeding activity. **J. Zool**, London 242 1997

Ray Tabor
Chairman Essex Wildlife Trust
&
David Hooton
The Deer Initiative
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Non native species pose a serious threat…

Did you know that Great Britain has more non-native species recorded than any other country in Europe – an audit of non-native species in England in 2005 found 2271 species in the wild. Most of these have not had any noticeable negative impacts – however a small minority have caused considerable harm…and we know who you are! This is an important issue which must be tackled.

Natural England have released a draft policy on Invasive Non-native Species Invasive non-native species which explains Natural England's belief regarding the threat posed by invasive non-native species in England

- sets out an approach to dealing with invasive non-native species, and;

- sets out that, where feasible, populations, habitats and ecosystems adversely affected by invasive non-native species should be restored.

This is an interesting read and if you wish you can provide a response via the response form (we have) before the 1st May 2009

The 2007 survey of breeding corn buntings in Essex

The UK Corn Bunting population declined by 89% between 1970 and 2006 and it is still declining. This decrease, being greater than 50% in 25 years, makes Corn Bunting a Red-Listed species, it is also a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. The most recent national population estimate puts the UK population at between 8,500 and 12,200 territories. Set against this massive national decline, Essex still has a relatively good Corn Bunting population.

The aim of the 2007 Essex Corn Bunting Survey was to count the numbers of territory-holding male Corn Buntings in a sample of tetrads in the County. In addition to this, information was also gathered on the habitat occupied by the birds and the type of song-post being used. In order to gain extra information on both numbers and distribution casual records were also gathered.

Fifty tetrads (2km x 2km squares) were chosen, with the aim of getting a good spread throughout the various sub-populations found during the 1988-1994 recording period. An excellent response to the call for volunteers meant that we managed to cover 33 of the chosen tetrads.

The survey required three visits to be made to the selected tetrad between 2nd May and 20th July. On each visit, observers were asked to locate all territory-holding Corn Buntings in the tetrad. Further information was gathered on each tetrad for use in the analysis, namely the percentage of farmland within each tetrad and the distance from the centre of each tetrad to the coast. The casual record form asked people to record similar information to that recorded for tetrads.

The key facts to come out of this survey:

- Of the 33 tetrads chosen only 14 (42%) held birds.
- There has been an obvious contraction to the coast, with all but three occupied tetrads being within 1.8km of the coast.
- Casual data confirms that there are very few birds being seen away from the coastal zone.
- Numbers on the coast remain high in some areas, with three tetrads having over 20 singing males.
- The tetrad data imply a county population of between 1,313 and 1554 singing male corn buntings.
- Using a UK breeding population of 10,350, this survey implies that Essex has c.15% of the UK breeding population.

It is a great pity that this survey was not carried out 20 years ago, we would surely have been able to demonstrate a massive decline and redistribution. However, at least we now have a good base line to work from. This survey, combined with the on-going British Trust for Ornithology Atlas work, should give us a clear picture of current Corn Bunting distribution and a reasonable estimate of numbers. This is a survey that will be well worth repeating in, say, 10 years time. It is hoped that in the intervening time, with targeted agri-environment grant, numbers will have stabilised and, hopefully, started to rise.

Chris Tyas
RSPB Essex Area Manager

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The water framework directive consultation – get on board!



The Water Framework Directive is coming. It's big, it's scary, it's difficult to steer. With everybody's help, we may just be able to get it to go where we want – to that happy land where all our rivers, lakes, estuaries and seas have good ecology.

Seriously folks, the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a European Union Directive that is now part of UK law and currently being turned into practical action by the Environment Agency. It sets a target of achieving at least 'good' ecological and chemical status for all inland and coastal waters. The route to how this is achieved is described in the Draft River Basin Management Plan (Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex are included in the Anglian River Basin District).

The Environment Agency is seeking to consult widely and all organisations and members of the public are invited to have their say. Consultation runs until 21st June 2009. To view the plan and make your response, please go to www.environment-agency.gov.uk/wfd and click on 'Anglian'. The draft plan can be downloaded and is not long (consultation main document). There are numerous annexes too, some of which are big (especially annex B, but this contains details of proposed actions and the details for individual waterbodies). You can also see more general explanations of the WFD on the main wfd page. Responses are encouraged on line. Alternatively all the details are available at local libraries or by writing to Water Framework Directive, Environment Agency, Kingfisher House, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough PE2 5ZR.

Don't miss the bus! Have your say or at least find out more about this important change to the way our waters are managed

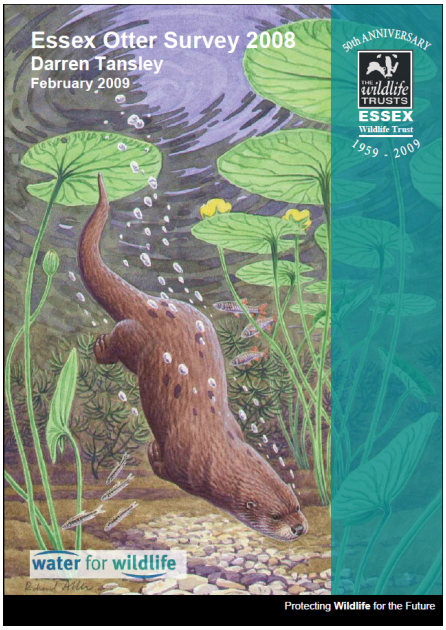
Julia Stansfield
Technical Specialist - Fisheries, Recreation & Biodiversity Team

julia.stansfield@environment-agency.gov.uk

The Essex Otter Survey 2008

2008 was the most successful survey yet with 85% of the county surveyed and 88 positive sites recorded as opposed to only 57 positive sites in 2007. The expansion of otter range is building year on year (if only people would stop mowing otters down on the A12 Colchester bypass!)

The report is now available as a PDF or hard copy – please contact me. If you have any questions about the report or would like a 'real' copy then please let me know and obviously I would welcome any new RIVERSEARCH volunteers who would like to take part in the 2009 survey.



Darren Tansley
Water for Wildlife Officer - Essex Wildlife Trust

darrent@essexwt.org.uk

School Orchard days in Essex

We have had another fantastic winter school orchard planting season with 6 new school orchards planted using traditional Essex apple tree varieties. Approximately 210 children and 18 teachers participated in the school orchard days. A couple of quotes from the children say it all -

> 'I have learned how the orchards and the trees in the olden days were still there as I thought they were a new discovery' Jessica

> 'I loved learning all about the different apples and apple trees! and digging the holes for the trees and filling them up with dirt.' Hattie

The events are funded by the Essex Biodiversity Project and there is no cost to the school. If you know of a school who would like to have a school orchard planting day please contact me

Laura Harvey
Schools Outreach Officer – Essex Wildlife Trust

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Open air laboratories

OPAL East of England is the new regional partner for a new England-wide initiative Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) to encourage people to explore and study their local environments. www.OPALexplorenature.org

Explore our orchards and the wonderful things that live there. We want people to observe and learn to identify some of the less common plant and animal species that live in the region's fruit orchards.

Extraordinary species
Discover the mosses, liverworts, lichens and fungi that grow on and around different varieties of fruit trees. We hope to help everyone develop an appreciation of the beauty of these less commonly studied organisms.

Get involved - Orchard investigations
From spring 2009 we will be organising orchard investigations. Join us as we explore the wildlife

within local fruit-growing sites. Afterwards you can use microscopes and digital photography to help identify and record what you have found. To find out more or to register your interest please contact opaleastofengland@herts.ac.uk.

Field guides
We will also produce simple guides to the wildlife and plants that can be spotted in orchards to inform your own explorations and bring these habitats alive.

Orchards in the East of England
The East of England is famous for its orchards and long history of growing fruit. Some historic orchards, particularly apple, have trees well over 100 years old. The continued use and varied management of orchards make them very interesting habitats.

The fruit growing industry is now much reduced in the region, however, community orchards are being planted, and traditional orchards are being managed for conservation as well as for fruit production. Natural England is currently developing a Habitat Action Plan for Traditional Orchards within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

Contact us
OPAL East of England is led by the University of Hertfordshire and run by Dr Agneta Burton of the University of Hertfordshire 01707 284517 m.a.burton@herts.ac.uk , a community scientist Dr Lorna Patterson l.2.paterson@herts.ac.uk 017070285050 is in posty to support community based groups.

Our partners
British Bryological Society
British Lichen Society
British Mycological Society



Halting biodiversity loss by 2010 - Wildlife and Countryside Link assessment of progress during 2008

In January 2006, Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) published a challenge to Government by setting out what we thought the 2010 biodiversity commitment meant and how progress should be measured. We agreed to look at progress on an annual basis, to highlight successes or failures around the turn of the year.

Presented below is our 2009 assessment of progress during 2008, against the performance indicators we included in the original leaflet. These assessments have been made at an England level, but in some cases, we have had to use broader information for the UK.

Green indicates that good progress is being made, amber means moderate progress has taken place and red means progress has been poor. For more information, click here for a copy of the full report

1. **Protecting and enhancing threatened species and habitats (Stop the rot)**

Performance indicator: No BAP priority species and habitats 'still declining' by 2010

Assessment – Amber/Red (unchanged)

2. **Protecting and managing our finest wildlife sites (Protect the best)**

a) Marine

Performance indicator: A complete Marine Protected Area network (including Natura 2000 sites, OSPAR MPAs nationally important marine sites and Highly Protected Marine Reserves) identified and notified by 2010

Assessment – **Amber/Red** (upgraded from **red**)

b) Terrestrial and freshwater sites

Performance indicator: 95% of UK SSSI/ASSIs in favourable condition by 2010

Assessment - Green/Amber (downgraded from **Green**)

3. **Making space for biodiversity (Restore the rest)**

a) Wider countryside

Performance Indicator: By 2010, there should be a positive trend in the indices for farmland and woodland bird populations, for bats and for butterflies.

Birds: Assessment - **Amber/Red** (downgraded from **Amber**)

Bats: Assessment - **Amber** (unchanged)

Butterflies: Assessment - **Amber** (unchanged)

b) Education

Performance Indicator: By 2010, all school children should have gained experience of the natural world through out-of-classroom learning as an integral part of school education.

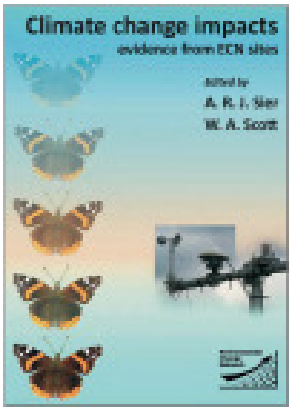
Assessment: **Amber/Red** (downgraded from **Amber**)

(another) New report on climate change impacts from long-term research in the UK

The UK Environmental Change Network has released a new publication. *Climate change impacts: evidence from ECN sites*, highlights some of the findings from ECN monitoring and research. Well worth a look with some excellent and easily accessible information well interpreted and illustrated.

Download from

http://www.alter-net.info/pooled/articles/BF_NEWSART/view.asp?Q=BF_NEWSART_311044&page=



A million ponds…

Pond Conservation has launched its new **Pond Creation Toolkit**, with all the advice you need to dig new, clean water ponds that contribute to the Million Ponds Project targets. The toolkit can be downloaded for free from www.pondconservation.org.uk/millionponds/pondcreationtoolkit/.

Please register new ponds that meet the Million Ponds Project criteria at www.pondconservation.org.uk/millionponds/reporting . The three criteria are that the new ponds need

1. a clean water source.
2. to be left to colonise naturally.
3. to be left to thrive without undue disturbance.

Defra announces body to help businesses and communities go green

Defra is bringing together a range of bodies under WRAP's leadership to provide a one-stop-shop to help businesses, organisations and households become more resource efficient, Environment Secretary Hilary Benn has announced.
The decision was made following the recommendations from the Delivery Landscape Review set up in February 2008 to examine the seven organisations funded by Defra which currently work on resource efficiency. This will make it easier for businesses and households to get the advice they need on how to be more resource efficient by providing a single point of contact.
Secretary of State for the Environment, Hilary Benn said:
"All these organisations have done a great job in helping businesses and households to use resources more efficiently. But we know that some customers were confused by the myriad of services and bodies, so that is why we are making these changes.
"Now, under WRAP leadership we will provide a one stop shop for resource efficiency advice, and this should make it quicker and easier for people to get what they need."
WRAP CEO Liz Goodwin said:
"We welcome this opportunity to lead a single organisation for resource efficiency. We believe it will help bring clarity for those seeking advice and support on resource efficiency - many of whom have already said they would prefer to deal with one organisation."
This simplification is part of the cross-Government Business Support Simplification Programme which aims to make it easier for businesses to access Government help and advice.

Garden 'Herps' (amphibians and reptiles) Survey

The British Trust for Ornithology, Froglife and The HCT are jointly launching a garden herps survey http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/7977971.stm. Surveys carried out by garden owners are an efficient way to gather information on herps in urban and suburban areas. Previous garden surveys have been carried out in specific localities, so this is the first time that such a project has been attempted nationally. It will gather information on:

- Native and non-native herps seen in gardens
- Features of the garden and its setting
- Garden ponds
- Incidence of frog mortalities

The survey is really pretty easy to complete. Participants simply mark boxes to indicate their observations. If you want survey forms for yourself or to distribute to ARG members, or at any public events then please contact Ange Reynolds at the HCT office angela.reynolds@herpconstrust.org.uk (address below). The survey forms will be read by a scanner which can handle only the specially printed forms, so we cannot make these downloadable – you have to get them from Ange.

The survey will cover 2008 and this year up to the end of June (although the section on frog mortalities goes back to 2006 – the last warm summer we had!). The deadline for return of survey forms is the end of July this year.

BTO will be distributing the survey forms to participants of *Garden BirdWatch* its *Bird Table* magazine. But anyone else is welcome to take part. There's 16,000 or so *Garden BirdWatch* participants – so it would be great to have input from some herpers.

If you can take part in the survey or distribute forms to other likely garden herp watchers then your help will be appreciated.

John Baker

Widespread Amphibian and Reptile Project
ARG UK/The HCT
The Herpetological Conservation Trust,
655A Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 4AP.
01202 391319
www.arguk.org
www.herpconstrust.org.uk

Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition

On now until 26 April 2009, Natural History Museum, London. Visit the Natural History Museum website www.naturalhistorymuseum.org.uk to see this year's winning entries in the on-line gallery or to book tickets to visit the exhibition.

The tide turns…Marine and Coastal Access Bill update

The Bill started its Committee stages on 12 January 2009. It has been announced that Tyneside will be the home of the headquarters of a new body to regulate and manage the sea around England, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). The MMO is intended to be a '*centre of expertise that will contribute to sustainable development, streamline regulation and improve enforcement'*.

The MMO's responsibilities will include a new marine planning system, a new integrated marine licensing system, enforcement of sea fisheries, nature conservation and licensing using powers under the Marine and Coastal Access Bill. The MMO will be a Non-Departmental Public Body, replacing the Marine and Fisheries Agency and will take on the new marine planning function and some responsibilities from other government departments and agencies, bringing together marine functions in one independent body for the first time.



Thurrock Marshes…

The three-year battle to save West Thurrock Marshes from destruction suffered a massive set-back on 28 January, when the Court of Appeal judged that the decision to build on the site was lawful. The case is the first legal test of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
For more information, visit the Buglife website www.buglife.org.uk

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Utility company fined for damaging Great crested newt habitat

On 6 March 2009 at Chelmsford Magistrates Court, EDF Energy Networks (EPN) PLC, were fined £1,000 with £90 costs after pleading guilty to damaging or destroying a resting place of Great crested newts at an electricity infrastructure site in Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex.
The company had carried out an extension to their site following the construction of a new housing estate nearby without an ecological assessment. In 2006 a housing developer was convicted of a similar offence when they carried out works outside of the conditions of a licence issued to them by Natural England in respect of great crested newts.
Following the verdict, Natural England Wildlife Management Adviser for Essex, Paul Cantwell said: "This case highlights the importance of companies, including utility companies, of carrying out ecological assessments before undertaking works on sites where there may be protected species. It is not just large scale developments or projects that can have detrimental impacts on protected species, smaller scale work such as this can also be damaging."

PC Andrew Long, the Wildlife Crime Co-ordinator for Essex Police said: "This case demonstrates that Essex Police, working with agencies such as Natural England can have a positive impact on wildlife crime. Essex Police will, where possible, investigate matters of wildlife crime, and if there is sufficient evidence refer the matter to the Crown Prosecution Service."

Great crested newts and their habitat are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). They breed in ponds but spend much of their lives on land, sometimes venturing several hundred metres from the pond. They often depend on several ponds close together, linked by suitable land habitats. Great crested newts are found in rural, suburban and urban areas. A licence is required to undertake actions affecting great crested newts which would normally be prohibited by law (such as capturing newts, or filling in their breeding ponds).

Information on species licensing and the law regarding protected species in England can be found at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/default.aspx

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Butterfly Conservation Review 2000-2008

This excellent review celebrates the 40th anniversary of Butterfly Conservation. Included are national recording and monitoring schemes, action programmes for threatened species, Butterfly Conservation's nature reserves and research collaborations. The Conservation Review can be downloaded from Butterfly Conservation's website www.butterfly-conservation.org

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Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Non-native species survey

Norfolk Wildlife Trust is undertaking a survey on the distribution of 5 non-native species in Norfolk – American mink, Giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and muntjac deer. For further info, email Barry Madden: barrym@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

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All Change for Climate Change!

Brand New Gallery Opens in the Natural History Museum, Colchester Tuesday 7th April 11.00am

Come along and be the first to see the Natural History Museum's brand new gallery on geology and climate change on Tuesday 7th April. The new gallery explores climate change and millions of years of history! With interactive activities, stunning fossils, stories and ancient species such as the giant shark – the new gallery is a must see.

Find out about

- Climate change
- Life forms
- The environment
- Geology
- Recycling

See

- A giant shark jaw
- A replica of a young baby shark
- Fossils and bones

Come along to the grand opening of the new gallery and enjoy

- A FREE fossil craft activity, where you can make and take home your own fossil
- Information on how to recycle and reduce wastage
- The chance to have your own fossils identified by museum experts with a fossil identification table

Plus a limited amount of free gifts will be available, so come along and help celebrate the opening of our new gallery!

www.colchestermuseums.org.uk 01206 282941

Open Mon – Sat 10am – 5pm
Sun 11am – 5pm
FREE ADMISSION

Wetland creation and management guidance

Natural England and the Association of Drainage Authorities have produced **The Drainage Channel Biodiversity Manual** which is available as a PDF download from http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/naturalenglandshop/product.aspx?ProductID=e2dae3b7-f789-40e8-b0f6-8cf8a1637032

An excellent well illustrated publication with case studies and information pages relating to flood storage, drainage and watercourse management and implications for aquatic and riparian wildlife. It includes lots of practical advice for maintaining flow and flood storage, as well as habitat protection/creation - even things like the management of drove roads and hedge laying!



The Second International Youth Symposium For Biodiversity

is being planned for Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Students aged 12-19 are invited to submit biodiversity project proposals to attend. If you, your school or community is involved in something valuable for biodiversity and you want to share it with the world then you should apply to be part of this great event! Details are available on the symposium website: www.biodiversitymatters.org

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Japanese knotweed treatment tax relief

The government will legislate in the Finance Bill to extend Land Remediation expenditure on contaminated land to include the removal of Japanese knotweed by treatment from 1 April 2009. See page 18 of the document:
www.hmrc.gov.uk/budget2008/pn-complete.pdf (PDF 494 KB)



Quality Assurance of the UK Invertebrate Signposts

Buglife has published a review of the Invertebrate Signposts compiled by the UK BAP process and concluded: "*The summary finding is that generally the signposts/actions are incomplete and poorly drafted and hence are not a sound basis for local or country biodiversity conservation action*". Buglife consider that the review defined a good list of species in need of action and now want to ensure that appropriate actions are taken: habitat management, site protection, species recovery, policy changes and research. Buglife believes that the actions required need to be properly defined so that conservation efforts can be efficient and effective. For further information, visit the Buglife website www.buglife.org.uk

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and finally…

If you have any thoughts, suggestions, articles, pictures or personals for the next issue of ***the Biologue*** – contact your editor, Mark Iley, Biodiversity Coordinator marki@essexwt.org.uk tel 01621862975. The next issue will be Summer 2009 deadline for submissions is the end of June

Remember that God gave us two ears and one mouth and we should use them in those proportions

Who and what is the Essex Biodiversity project?
Partners are committed to enhancing biodiversity and are working together to implement the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan. Partners support the project in a variety of ways, with funding, time, expertise or other resources.

Essex Biodiversity Project

Essex Biodiversity Project is a group of more than 40 nature conservation organisations, statutory agencies, voluntary interest groups, businesses, community groups and local authorities working together for the biodiversity of Essex.

Funding members:

Chelmsford Borough Council · Natural England · Braintree District Council · Essex County Council · Uttlesford District Council · Brentwood Borough Council · defra · Maldon District Council · Essex & Suffolk Water · Harlow Council · Environment Agency · County Route · John Laing · The Wildlife Trusts Essex Wildlife Trust · Epping Forest District Council · Forestry Commission England · Tendring Hundred Water · Thurrock Council

Supporting members: British Trust for Conservation Volunteers • Butterfly Conservation • Castle Point Borough Council • Colchester Borough Council • Conservators of Epping Forest • Dedham Vale & Stour Valley Project • Essex Amphibian and Reptile Group • Essex Bat Group • Essex Birdwatching Society • Essex Field Club • Essex Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group • Game Conservancy Trust • Havering Borough Council • Lee Valley Regional Park • Peoples Trust for Endangered Species • Royal Horticultural Society • Royal Society for the Protection of Birds • Southend Borough Council • Thames Chase Community Forest • Thames Estuary Partnership • The National Trust • The Suffolk Coasts & Heaths Unit • Writtle College.

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