

BIODIVERSITY ACTION

August 2006

BAP Update Launch

This event was held on 16th June 2006 at Woolhope Village Hall and Haugh Woods. The weather was very good and in total – 45 people turned up at the event. A lot of time was spent preparing for the smooth running on the day and this involved reccie visits to Haugh Woods, organising walk leaders, bookings speakers, caterers and a coach. The day kicked off with an introduction by Councillor Phil Edwards followed by a talk by Nicky Davies on the Herefordshire LBAP – Past, present and future. After this presentation, Chris Stubbs (Woolhope Dome Project Officer) provided a talk on the Woolhope Dome BEA project. After the talks, attendees got onto a coach up to Haugh Woods in the Woolhope Dome where Kate



Enjoying a talk by Andrew Nixon in the meadows at Plantlife's 'Joan's Hill Farm'



Andrew Nixon (Wye Valley AONB) talking to group about the Brown-banded carder bee *Bombus humilis*

Wollen (Forestry Commission England) gave a brief on the management of these woods before the group was split into two. One group was led by Kate and Trevor Hulme (Ranger – Countryside Service) and the other by Chris Stubbs and Jo Hackman (Council Ecologist). The groups went in opposite directions and met up at Joan's Hill Farm meadows (Plantlife reserve) for a talk by Andrew Nixon (Wye Valley AONB) and Nicky Davies. The group then slowly trundled back to the coach (looking at the biodiversity in the woods and chatting) which took us back to the hall for a buffet lunch (local and organic produce) and the opportunity to look at displays and discuss issues on an informal basis. Feedback has been nothing but positive and requests were given for this kind of event to be held on a regular basis.

Plant Invaders - are they in your neighbourhood?

Help Plantlife this summer by looking out for three of the UK's most destructive plant invaders! Your support will help us to understand the extent to which our countryside and gardens are under threat.

Imported plants can be fast growing and can quickly become invasive in the countryside. They can damage natural habitats, out-competing native plants and blocking up ponds and rivers. Most problem species have escaped from gardens and some are still sold in garden centres. Controlling and eradicating them is hard work and can cost millions of pounds.

Plantlife's Plant Invaders Survey asks you to look out for three of the UK's most invasive plants: Japanese Knotweed, Indian Balsam and New Zealand Pigmyweed. We are keen to know what type of habitat has been invaded (e.g. woodland) as well as the approximate number of plants.

We are campaigning to ban the sale of the most destructive plant invaders. Please visit our website for more information about the survey and the problems of invasive plants: www.plantlife.org.uk If you would like to receive a postcard to complete, please email me or phone 01722 342755.

Katherine Stewart
People for Plants Officer

Plantlife International
The Wild Plant Conservation Charity



Butterfly Conservation

Will be running butterfly ID courses next year, and are still keen to hear from people who want to do recording - either transects, or looking at single species. If you would like to become involved, please contact Anna Jordan. See page 4, for contact details.

Website

The Herefordshire LBAP website is being updated shortly and will support more information on what is going on in the county as well as updated links and plans.

If you would like to visit the site, please visit www.herefordbap.org.uk

Progress

Nicky has now been in post for 6 months and had the opportunity to meet most partners involved in the BAP process in Herefordshire. If this hasn't been the case and you want to meet Nicky to discuss biodiversity issues, then please call or email to arrange a meeting. From these meetings, feedback has been received on the LBAP update and a lot of information gathering has been undertaken to identify what work is being done across the county in relation to the implementation of the plan.

As well as this, Nicky has written an outline of the role of organisations involved in the BAP process in Herefordshire to clarify what needs to be done by both lead and key partners in relation to implementing and co-ordinating actions for the smooth running and achievement of set targets.

Nicky has also been working closely with her counterpart in Worcester, Helen Jackson to look at key delivery of the LBAP on a cross-boundary basis, as well as looking at similar issues that the counties face and working closely on regional projects.

BBC Breathing Places

The **Breathing Places** grants programme is a UK wide small grants programme developed in partnership with the BBC to complement the Breathing Places campaign that includes Springwatch and Autumnwatch.

The Breathing Places grants programme has two aims:

- 1) Increase participation and access to local natural areas or 'Breathing Places' by encouraging people to become actively involved in them.
- 2) Make a lasting improvement to the local environment by supporting activities that develop existing breathing places or help create and sustain new ones.

Open to voluntary or community sector organisations working at a local level, Town and Parish Councils, applications for grants of £300 to £10,000 are invited for projects aimed at getting more people involved in and using their existing local natural places.

Applications will also be invited from the autumn for projects linked to creating new natural places (this will be open to schools).

For more information about Breathing Places visit www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces or contact the Big Advice Line on 0845 410 2030.

Newsflash

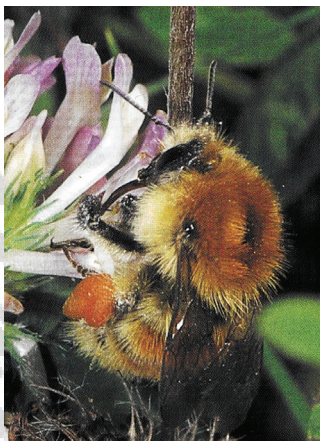
High Brown Fritillary re-discovered at Croft Castle

Britain's most threatened butterfly rediscovered on Bircher Common. The High Brown Fritillary, considered to be Britain's most threatened species of butterfly following a 95% decline in its range, has been rediscovered on Bircher Common, part of the National Trust's Croft Castle estate in north-west Herefordshire.

One was spotted by Matthew Oates, the National Trust's butterfly expert, on a visit to the site in July 2006. No sightings of the butterfly were made in 2004 & 2005, leading to fears that it had become extinct at this site where its fortunes are monitored closely by staff from the National Trust and volunteers from Butterfly Conservation. The very similar Dark Green Fritillary also occurs at Bircher, making positive identification of the High Brown difficult, but Matthew spotted one within 5 minutes of his first visit to the common since 2003. However, no confirmed sightings of the High Brown Fritillary have been made subsequently, suggesting that the butterfly remains at dangerously low numbers despite considerable efforts by the National Trust to maintain extensive areas of its favoured bracken habitat in suitable condition for breeding.



Species of the month



Brown-banded carder bee *Bombus humilis* – A local and national BAP species

This bee is found in Southern Britain and is strongly associated with tall flower-rich grassland meadows supporting scatterings of species including red clover, knapweed and vetches to name a few. It makes its small nest from moss raked from the litter layer of the grassland and the top of the nest is exposed to the sunshine.

The bee is a pale ginger colour and fairly small in size. When studied closely, a few black hairs can be seen on the thorax and also there are never any black hairs on the side of the abdomen. It is easily confused with *Bombus muscorum*

Best habitat management options for this bee include increasing sward diversity to include the aforementioned plant species, and having good field margins.

Evidence suggests it is more likely to survive on long, narrow mosaics of habitat better than some other threatened bumblebees. However, the bee's nesting density is very low (often with less than 100 workers) so it needs a large area of land to support a viable colony. Narrow habitat-mosaics are unfortunately particularly vulnerable to fragmentation, although due to the rural nature of the Herefordshire landscape this isn't a huge threat to the desirable breeding habitat. Other factors to consider for the increased area of suitable habitat include the shift back from silage making to traditional haymaking and sensitive planning consideration for development.

This species has suffered a dramatic decline throughout the 20th century and is now extinct in many counties across the UK. Although there has been some speculative records of this species within Herefordshire, we are attempting to find out if this bee does still exist in the county and if so, where? If it does, we need to collate some verified records to look at maintaining their presence in Herefordshire.

If you know of any nests of this highly sensitive species, please contact Nicky Davies on 01432 383026

BARS

The Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) is a web-based information system that supports the planning, monitoring and reporting requirements of national and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs).

BARS enables everyone involved in BAP implementation, including LBAP partnerships and Lead Partner organisations, to enter action plans and record progress towards targets and actions. BARS uses drop-down lists and quantitative fields to provide a standardised structure so that BAP information can be integrated across users. This information can be searched by members of the public to learn about BAP activities underway. A range of sophisticated reports is available to BAP users enabling them to generate summaries from their data and to set their work in the wider context.

Although some of you may be familiar with BARS usage in Herefordshire, it hasn't been updated recently, especially in light of the production of the LBAP Update (See previous article). Work is progressing on ensuring this system is up and running again and Nicky is planning training on BARS use for relevant partners. The workshops will be held in the autumn once plan data has been entered onto the website.

If you would like more details about BARS, please check their website

<http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/default.asp>

Biodiversity Enhancement Areas (BEAs) consultation

Biodiversity Enhancement Areas complement the range of policy and delivery measures that protect and enhance biodiversity across protected sites and the wider environment. It is one of the approaches given priority within the Regional Spatial Strategy along with those for specific species and habitats identified in Biodiversity Action Plans, Strategic River Corridors and measures to ensure that the Region reaches or exceeds its share of the UKBAP targets.

The BEAs approach is relatively new. Their use is still being developed and the benefits will take time to be fully realised. Action so far has concentrated on two areas:

- Developing two pilot BEA projects supported by English Nature and partners to demonstrate area based delivery.
- Production of maps and guidance to help implement BEA policy

The consultation ran for two months and was managed by Penny Anderson Associates. This included participation and feedback from more than 70 individuals and organisations in local and regional workshops and a further 40 written responses. For further information see www.wmbp.org/beas

Natural England (NE) and the Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan

On October 1, English Nature – a major player in the county BAP since its inception, will be replaced by Natural England, created under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The latter's purpose is *'to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development'*

The internal processes to merge EN with the Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service have been protracted and difficult. Most staff will not know their job assignments until September, and only then will a West Midlands regional structure be confirmed and the members of NE's Herefordshire Team known.

Natural England's first national strategy (2006-09) states three reasons for its biodiversity conservation work; intrinsic value, quality of life, and services from healthy functioning ecosystems. In this regard, it commits NE to continue working with everyone that EN has since 1991, with biodiversity practice integrated with a broad conservation remit for other natural and cultural assets and heritage features. This will entail a fresh look at what the organisation can achieve for, with and through Local BAP partnerships and plans and other means e.g. AONB Management Plans, Geodiversity Action Plans.

In this context, the most relevant targets in the strategy are as follows. Firstly, NE's own quantified contribution to bettering the condition and extent of priority agricultural and wetland habitats. Herefordshire's Habitat Action Plans should inform the local target share adopted by NE. Secondly, 90% of county biodiversity partnerships to meet nationally agreed service standards by March 2007. The mechanism in place between EN, the Council, the Herefordshire Partnership and the Nature Trust provides a good basis for attaining satisfactory performance against core services for LBAP co-ordination. Thirdly, the intention is to develop integrated targets and plans combining landscape, biodiversity and access for selected river catchments. If the Wye or Lugg is selected for this purpose, it would build on the strategic content of the Herefordshire Rivers Leader + Programme and the local NE/Environment Agency efforts to promote better farming practice for protection of rivers and waterbodies.

Participants in the Herefordshire Biodiversity Partnership can enable NE to come good in its mission of an integrated approach to the natural environment. That means striving to meet, and go beyond, the prioritised objectives and actions in the county BAP in ways that maximise wider benefits for environmental sustainability, and for linked social and economic gains. Let's hope NE's creation will catalyse the step change in the fortunes of the county's wildlife and natural places we all seek.

Mark July
Deputy Team Manager
English Nature Herefordshire and Worcestershire Team.

Landscapes for living

Landscapes for Living is an exciting and ambitious new initiative which will develop a 50 year vision and landscape opportunity map for the West Midlands Region. Led by the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership, it will be managed and supported by the West Midlands Wildlife Trusts on their behalf. It will build on existing partial regional maps such as the BEA map and on local mapping exercises and seek to integrate these into a comprehensive vision and map for the region.

If you would like to know more on this, please contact: Mike Kinghan, Regional Director for West Midlands Wildlife Trusts on 07932 757826 or 0121 454 6091 or email Mike.K@urbanwt.cix.co.uk

Or

Jeff Edwards, West Midlands Biodiversity Co-ordinator. Tel: 0121 213 4933 or email:

jeff.Edwards@english-nature.org.uk

Stop Press – new publication

"The Amphibians and Reptiles of Herefordshire." to be published by HBRC at end of August. Available from HBRC, price £6.99.

Diary dates

17th August - Recorders visit to Wellington gravel pit. All day event to record across taxonomic groups

19th August - Moth Trapping night at Croft Castle - please contact Anna Jordan on 01531 635234 or email her on ajordan@butterfly-conservation.org

31st Aug, Monmouth Show - similar to Queenswood Open Day - volunteers needed for this event – if you can help, please contact Anna Jordan on details provided.

23rd September – National Moth Night. Contact Anna Jordan

If you would like more information about the Herefordshire LBAP, please contact Nicky Davies, Herefordshire Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator, PO Box 144, Hereford HR1 2YH.

Telephone: 01432 383026

Email: ndavies2@herefordshire.gov.uk

The Herefordshire Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator post is joint-funded by English Nature and Herefordshire Council.

