



**Buckinghamshire  
& Milton Keynes**  
Biodiversity Partnership

# Biodiversity News

*Issue 7 Winter 2010/11*

## Welcome

Welcome to the latest issue of Biodiversity News. We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Despite the background of cuts to local authorities and other organisations active in the Biodiversity Partnership there is still a lot going on in the county.

In this issue you'll discover that a rare bat has been proved to breed in North Bucks, how calcareous grassland and acid grassland are being restored, a project to conserve barn owls and how 2 schools in Wendover are doing there bit, even getting Chris Packham involved.

I hope you enjoy it all

Jez Elkin

Biodiversity Project Officer

## Rare Bat Discovered to be Breeding in Buckinghamshire

A local wildlife group has discovered the Bechstein's bat, one of Britain's rarest mammals, in several North Buckinghamshire woodlands.

Volunteers from the North Bucks Bat Group (NBBG) have spent the summer surveying Buckinghamshire woodlands as part of a national surveying effort coordinated by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT). In three sections of a large woodland complex Bechstein's bats (*Myotis bechsteinii*) were found; Bechstein's bat is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and is protected by EU legislation. Records for Bechstein's bats are very limited, and previously their range was not thought to extend this far North East. The bats were found in dense oak woodland, their favoured habitat, although the exact locations are not disclosed in order to avoid disturbance to the bats and to respect the wishes of the landowners.

The survey method divides the county into 10 km grid squares and targets the optimal woodland in each square, where access is possible. Daytime surveys to assess different woodlands in each square were followed by a night time survey visit with specialised equipment. Bechstein's bats are hard to find using conventional survey methods as they rarely fly out of the dense woodland in which they forage and many of the tools normally used to capture flying bats are less effective in such situations. The relatively new method used in these surveys involves the use of electronically simulated bat social calls, which can act to attract nearby bats. Curious bats are then captured using a harp trap which is designed to catch flying bats without harming them.

A total of nine Bechstein's bats have been caught so far in North Bucks as a result of this surveying. The first location yielded five individuals; all female, of which two were adult females that had bred this year, and three were juvenile bats which had been born this year. In the second location three further Bechstein's were caught, two juvenile

A Bechstein's Bat caught on the survey  
©Toby Thorne



males and one adult male, which was already showing signs that it would be breeding in autumn. A further female was caught at another site slightly further away.

The surveying method attracts a number of bat species other than Bechstein's and a total of six species were recorded in surveys this year, many of which were in woods which have never before been surveyed before.



Volunteers with a bat caught on the survey ©Chris Damant

The Buckinghamshire surveys have taken place weekly throughout the summer of 2010 and surveying will continue at the beginning of summer next year to complete the coverage of the county. Around forty volunteers from the bat group assisted with the surveys, some of whom had previously had little experience handling bats.

Chairman of North Bucks Bat Group, Keith Parnell, said, "This result has exceeded everyone's expectations. I am so proud that our small group of volunteers can make a significant contribution to bat conservation at the national level."

The Buckinghamshire surveys were organised by Project Coordinators, Joanne Hodgkins and Toby Thorne from NBBG.

### **Toby Thorne**

**Buckinghamshire Bechstein's Project Co-ordinator**

**Tel: 07761 863529**

**Email: toby.thorne@sjc.ox.ac.uk**

## **2015 BAP Targets**

The 2015 targets for the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan have been set and are available for download on the Biodiversity Partnership website. They have been broken down into Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) and added to the BOA statements.

The targets are for

1. Maintaining Extent
2. Achieving Condition
3. Habitat Restoration
4. Habitat Creation



Heathland creation at Rammamere Heath in the Greensand Ridge BOA by the Greensand Trust.  
*Photo Phil Irving*

The targets have been set using both information on existing and planned projects from partner organisations and using the guideline percentage increases set out in the England Biodiversity Strategy.

For more information go to

[www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/sites/partnership/bmkbp/home.page](http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/sites/partnership/bmkbp/home.page)

**Jez Elkin**

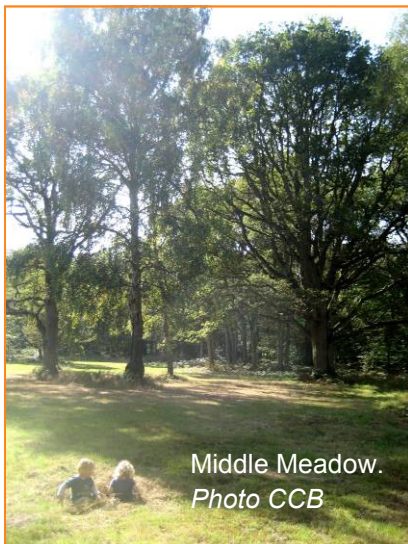
**Biodiversity Project Officer**

## Moor End Common Wins Award

The overall winner of the 2010 Chilterns Wildlife and Landscape Award was Moor End Common - in recognition of the hard work and achievements of the Voluntary Wardens who oversee the management of the site on behalf of the Parish Council.

This 21.6 ha Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Registered Common is owned by Lane End Parish Council. The common was designated a SSSI because of its Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, but, like many commons in the Chilterns, cessation of grazing in the 1950s allowed scrub encroachment and secondary woodland development. By 2005 the open grassland habitats had reduced from c 8.6ha in 1945 to c 1.2ha.

Since 2005, a new management plan has



been developed and work undertaken to open up and restore the acid grassland and to establish a mosaic of habitats including wood pasture. By 2011 the area of acid grassland is expected to have increased to around 5.2 ha.

Other works (over and above routine maintenance) have included a tree survey to identify trees to be retained for their landscape value; a new permissive bridle-way; a green corridor linking Middle and South Meadows (courtesy of Southern and Scottish Electricity) and creation of a wet grassland area on North Meadow.

The Voluntary Wardens – firstly Ross Osborn and more recently Katy Dunn and Emily Davis - appreciate that the common is an amazing resource for everyone to enjoy - ‘we do our best via email, articles in the Parish Magazine, leaflets and close contacts with schools and local groups to encourage people to walk there, take their kids for a picnic, go wildlife spotting or just sunbathe in Middle Meadow.’ The views of those who use the common or live adjacent to it are welcomed and help to

inform future management, but at the same time it is recognised that the ecological needs of the site have to take priority.

For the future, attention will turn to cost-effective, sustainable long-term management, and discussions are underway with a local conservation grazier, common rights holders and Natural England about a possible grazing trial.



The Chilterns Conservation Board judges were impressed with achievements to date and with the clear sense of purpose and vision for future management

of the site. They were particularly pleased to see the work to restore and enhance the network of habitats and the commitment to engaging and involving the local community in the management of common land.

The judges felt that Moor End is an excellent example of what can be achieved through the determined efforts of individuals in the local community working in partnership with landowners and nature conservation professionals. Many different organisations and individuals have provided advice and support, including Natural England, the Forestry Commission, Bucks County Council, the National Trust, the Chilterns Conservation Board, Frieth Natural History Society, Moorend Common Conservation Group, Chiltern Woodland Project, Wycombe Ranger Service, Nettlebed Green Gym, Oxford Brookes University, and Chris Ash.

The Chilterns Conservation Board will be inviting entries to the 2011 awards in the spring.

For more details contact

**Kath Daly**

**Countryside Officer**

**01844 355524**

**KDaly@chilternsaonb.org**

## Chalk Grassland Project at Dancers End Nature Reserve

In the last few months work with BBOWT's Chilterns Chalk Grassland project at Dancers End Reserve has been moving on at a considerable rate. New and existing volunteers have carried out lots of scrub clearance work and a number of trees have been removed to allow around 500 meters of new stock fencing to be erected.



Grassland creation at Dancersend  
Photo Simon Vining

This newly created grassland compartment is soon to be grazed by three new Dexter Cattle which will be on-site from mid January. The creation of this new enclosure means that cattle will be able to graze the area for the first time ever and will assist the reserves team with scrub control work.

In addition to the new fencing the Forestry Commission granted BBOWT with a felling licence to remove 0.2 ha of planted Larch woodland. This work will be taking place in February 2011 by one of our contractors, the work will allow us to push back the woodland edge and create a scrubby margin preferable to the Duke of Burgundy butterfly.

**Simon Vining**

**Chalk Grassland Project Officer BBOWT**

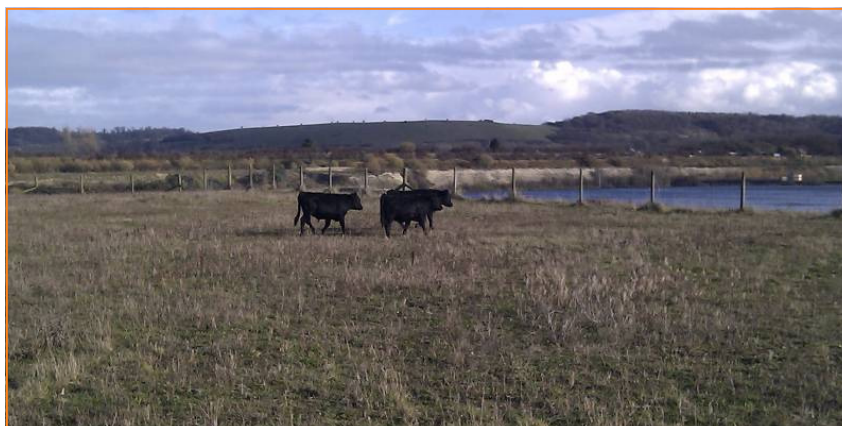
## Wildlife Trusts Employ a HS2 Campaign Co-ordinator

The Wildlife Trusts' response to High Speed 2 has stepped up a gear with the arrival of Ian Hepburn as Campaign Co-ordinator. This post is based at BBOWT and funded by the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts.

During the coming months Ian will be working with other Wildlife Trusts along the high speed rail route to coordinate the advocacy work on High Speed 2. He aims to build consensus with other Wildlife Trusts, provide coherent messages about the importance of wildlife conservation and consolidate our evidence-based campaign.

The post is currently funded until March 2011, by which time the Government expects to have started public consultation. BBOWT intends to bid for an extension of Ian's role to September 2011.

During the early part of 2011 BBOWT and other Wildlife Trusts will prepare to take part in the public consultation process. This will include providing information to members about the environmental impact of the route on wildlife in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.



BBOWT's new Dexter cattle at College Lake

*Photo Simon Vining*

## Barn Owl Project Launch

On the first day of December, in a chill wind and with a hard frost on the ground, the official launch of the Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC) Barn Owl Project took place at College Farm near Long Crendon. The Barn Owl Project is backed by WREN, HLF and Vale of Aylesbury Community Chest. Dave Short, the newly appointed part-time Barn Owl Project Officer, will be working closely with farmers, local residents, volunteer groups, parish councils and conservation bodies to promote Barn Owl conservation.



A Barn Owl being ringed.  
Photo AVDC

Richard Morris-Adams the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Aylesbury, and David Ramsden MBE of the Barn Owl Trust, both spoke enthusiastically of the need for landscape-scale conservation projects such as this. David Ramsden also commented on the continuing plight of the Barn Owl, whose numbers have decreased sufficiently in recent years for it to be on the Amber list as a species of conservation concern. Along with the continued use of rodenticides the major cause of Barn Owl mortalities are road collisions; this is a particularly regular occurrence where hedges along main roads are cut below 3 metres high.

College Farm is owned by the Morris family who have supported the Barn Owl Project since 2001. They have 3 barn owl boxes on the farm, one of which has regularly been used by a breeding pair up until this year when, in March the female was found dead probably as a result of the harsh winter. On the same day as the Barn Owl Project launch took place Vale Countryside Volunteers and members of the Biodiversity Team were demonstrating a method of hedge-laying devised by the Morris' and championed

by AVDC. It is a cost-effective technique which produces a high, dense hedge with plenty of productive top-growth for wildlife in a relatively short period. Another wildlife hedgelaying demonstration will take place on 16th February next year, at Walton Court Park in Aylesbury.

Alongside the landowners and volunteers at the launch was a group of school children and their teacher from the nearby Long Crendon Primary School. This is one of several Eco-schools across the Vale that Hilary Phillips, AVDC's Biodiversity Birthday Project Officer, will be working with over the coming year. The four themes of the Biodiversity Birthday Project: bats, Barn Owls, Black Poplars and urban biodiversity will form the focus of these schools' studies. The biodiversity theme will be applied across the curriculum, with art used as a means of engaging children and as a tool for recording their local wildlife. Buckingham children will be involved in planting a Black Poplar woodland, Aylesbury children will be recording the flowers and bats around their local meadow, and Wendover children will be helping to erect a Barn Owl box and monitoring other bird boxes in their school grounds.

As well as working with schools the Biodiversity Birthday Project aims are to celebrate the work done by landowners and volunteers over the last 21 years of AVDC's working with wildlife; promote existing wildlife groups to a wider audience of potential volunteers and establish new projects such as swift and sparrow groups.

**Hilary Phillips**

**AVDC Biodiversity Birthday Project Officer**



David Ramsden addresses the cold crowd  
Photo Hilary Phillips

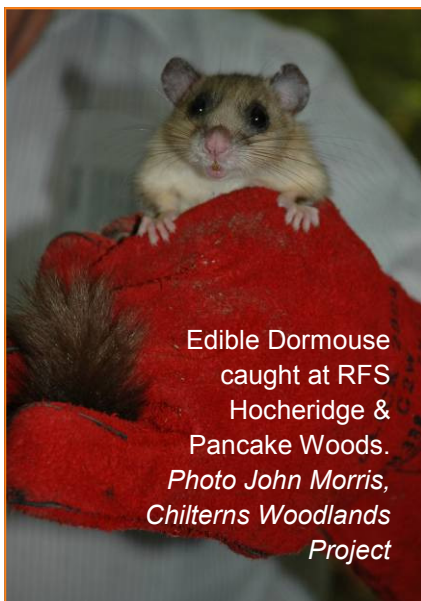
## The Economic Cost of Non-Native Invasive Species to the British Economy

The GB Non-Native Species Secretariat have produced a document entitled “The Economic Cost of Non-Native Invasive Species to the British Economy”, the key findings of which include:

Invasive non-native species (INNS) cost the British economy at least £1.7 billion per annum. This is likely to be significantly less than the full economic cost since many indirect costs resulting from INNS, such as the damage to ecosystem services and loss of biodiversity, cannot be readily quantified.

The cost to the agriculture and horticulture sectors (including the effects of plant pathogens) amounts to just under two thirds of the total estimated cost (approximately £1 billion to Great Britain)

The construction, development and infrastructure sector has the 2nd highest direct cost at approximately £212 million for Great Britain, Costs in this sector arise from very few species. Japanese Knotweed is by far the most



Edible Dormouse caught at RFS Hoheridge & Pancake Woods.  
Photo John Morris, Chilterns Woodlands Project

costly species, followed by the brown rat.

Plants as a group inflict the highest costs to the economy, with plant pathogens and mammals also causing considerable costs across sectors.

The twenty non-native species inflicting the highest economic damage are shown in the table.

For more information and to download the full report go to

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?sectionid=59>

Species	Economic Cost £m
Rabbit	263
Japanese Knotweed	166
Common Field Speedwell/ Wild Oat	100
Rat	62
Potato Cyst nematodes	50
Non-native deer	35
Varroa mite	27
Floating Pennywort	25
House Mouse	18
Grey Squirrel	14
Rhododendron	9
Slipper Limpet	6
Mink	5
Geese/swans	4
Green Spruce Aphid	4
Signal Crayfish	3
Giant Hogweed	2
Himalayan Balsam	1
Buddleia	1
Edible Dormouse	0.4

The Edible Dormouse (*Glis glis*) just made it into the top 20 most economically damaging non-native invasive species. This is despite its limited geographical spread in England—being mostly found in the Bucks and Herts Chilterns. It causes problems in woodlands by gnawing the bark of young trees, creating neat bands killing the top of the tree, causing it to snap. It is often found inside homes where it may cause damage to cables and disturbance at night as it moves around in the roof space. There have been reports of up to 70 animals being removed from one house.

Research work into this species has been going on for over 10 years in the Royal Forestry Society's Hockeridge & Pancake Woods, a 74 hectare wood near Berkhamsted. [www.rfs.org.uk/](http://www.rfs.org.uk/)

## Hedgerow Survey in Cholesbury & Hawridge

### Summary of Results 2010

The hedgerow survey is being undertaken in the Chess Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area by volunteers on behalf of the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership.

The key habitats in the area north west of Chesham are the chalk stream headwaters, the sites of species rich grassland and the network of pre-18th century hedgerows.

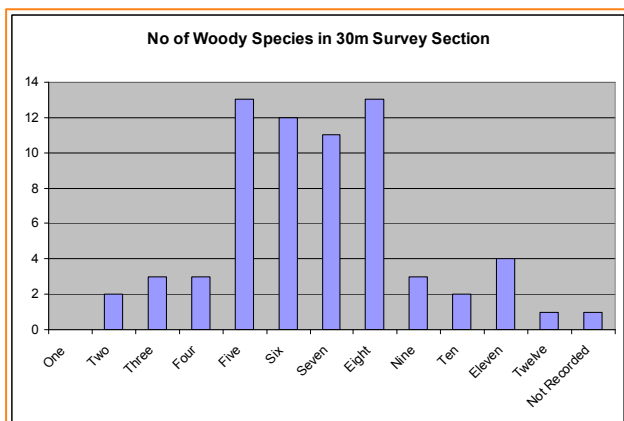
The importance of these hedgerows has also been highlighted by the Bucks County Council Archaeological Service in the Historic Landscape Characterisation of the county.

4.4km of hedgerow were surveyed in 2010, bringing the total since 2008 to 10.6km.

Unfortunately some of these hedges had not been managed for some time and had developed into a line of trees.

However 68 of the 80 hedges surveyed were still viable hedgerows.

72% of the hedges were comprised of between 5 and 8 woody species in a 30m survey section. A further 11 hedges had more than 8 woody species and only 6 less than 5.



A total of 29 woody species have been found, with the most frequent being Hawthorn, Hazel, Holly and Blackthorn.

The hedgerows are assessed to see whether they met the criteria as BAP Priority

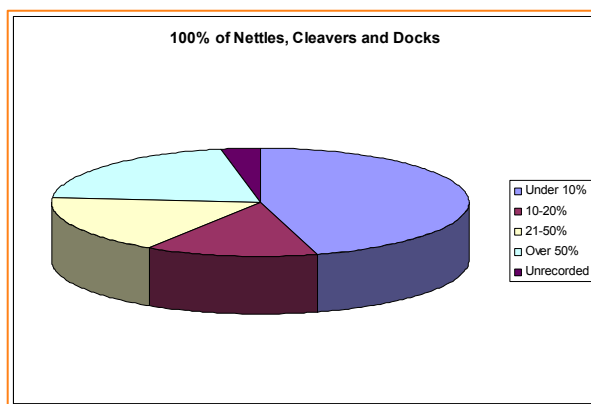
hedgerows and whether they met the criteria for good condition (as detailed in Defra's Hedgerow Survey Handbook 2nd edition), .

21 of these hedges met all of the criteria and can be said to be BAP Priority Hedgerows in good condition.

26 hedges were recorded as having no management evident. However several of these have been cleared for footpath usage or grazed by livestock. A total of 42 hedges were managed by flailing though only 12 of these had been managed in the last 2 years.

Just over 50% of the hedges had been flailed in the past 10 years, however over a third had no visible signs of deliberate management (though some of these had

Of the condition criteria the two criteria most commonly failed were the nutrient level of the hedgerow bottom and the height above ground of the hedgerow's canopy.



The nutrient levels of the hedgerow are measured as a means of assessing the ground conditions for woodland and hedgerow herbaceous plants. If there are high levels of nutrient enrichment then the ground flora will become dominated by nutrient loving fast growing species. Three of these are used as indicators of nutrient enrichment in the survey – Stinging Nettle, Cleavers (also known as Goosegrass) and Dock species.

40 of the hedges had less than 20% coverage of stinging nettles, cleavers and docks.

14 hedges were found to have over 50% coverage of these species.

57 of the hedges (84%) had a base canopy height of under 50cm. This demonstrates that the hedges are either currently managed or have been managed until the last few years, providing a dense hedge canopy. However the canopy height of 5 of the hedges was over 2m. If these hedges are not brought into management they begin to lose their shrubby nature and develop into a line of trees.

The results of the condition criteria are summarised in the table below.

No of hedges meeting BAP Priority Hedgerow Status	>80% woody species are native	68
No of Hedges meeting BAP Favourable Condition Criteria		21
No of hedges meeting undisturbed ground criteria	undisturbed ground >2m	64
	perennial herb veg >1m	67
No of hedges meeting nutrient enrichment criteria	(<20% cover nettles, docks, cleavers	40
No of hedges meeting non-native species criteria	<10% woody species in 30m survey non-native	68
	<10% non-native herbaceous species	68
No of hedges meeting size criteria	Height >1m	68
	Width >1.5m	65
	Cross Section >3 sq m	67
No of hedges meeting integrity criteria	<10% gaps	61
	No gaps >5m (except for gates)	57
	Canopy base <0.5m above ground	57

The participating landowners have been sent a detailed analysis of their hedges including advice on their hedges future management.

A full report of the results of the hedgerow survey so far can be obtained from Jez Elkin – [jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk) or download from the Biodiversity Partnership website – [www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/sites/partnership/bmkbp/home.page](http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/sites/partnership/bmkbp/home.page)

## Hedgerow Management in Environmental Stewardship

Natural England are hosting a free event aimed at Environmental Stewardship agreement holders who manage hedgerows in the scheme.

**27th January 2011**

**The Village Hall, Great Rollright, Oxfordshire, OX7 5SW. Followed by a farm walk at Cardwell Farm, Hook Norton Road, Great Rollright, Oxfordshire, OX7 5SB**

telephone **0300 060 1695** or email

[farmevents@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:farmevents@naturalengland.org.uk) ,

quoting your name, contact number and the location you will be attending (there are other events being held elsewhere in the country)

The programme is as follows:

10.30am Arrival, Tea and Coffee

11.00am – 12.30pm

An Introduction to the Farm

Habitats and Species – catering for species needs

Hedgerow Management – a practical look at techniques

Q&A session

12.30pm Buffet lunch

1.15pm Farm Walk

3.00pm Finish



## Yoesdon Bank—Calcareous Grassland Management

Yoesdon Bank lies between Radnage church and Bledlow Ridge. It is privately owned prime chalk grassland currently under HLS funding. It supports many local butterfly species including a good colony of Chalkhill Blue. A strip of grassland connects the main bank to another chalk grassland clearing in Yoesdon Wood. The clearing supports Chiltern Gentians and a fine stand of Devil's-bit Scabious. The strip and clearing are succumbing to invading brambles and scrub, principally young ash seedlings to a height of 10 feet. Eleven Earthworks Conservation Volunteers and three members of the Ruislip Natural History Society cleared the strip and some of the ash within the clearing on November 20th. Further visits will follow.



Yoesden Bank. The strip through to the clearing can be seen at the far end of the slope. *Photo Jez Elkin*

## Need help completing your ELS application?

Why not come to a local clinic where Natural England can go through the paperwork with you.

**19th January 2011**

**Huntsmill Farm, Shalstone, Bucks**

To book a slot between 10.30 and 4pm at this local clinic please contact or Cathy Pearman on 0300 060 4757 or Andrew Russell on 0300 060 1929 or email your request to

[Catherine.J.Pearman@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Catherine.J.Pearman@naturalengland.org.uk)

These contacts may be useful when applying for or renewing your Environmental Stewardship agreement ;

For administration, advice and questions, such as ordering your application pack, call our ISS team on **0300 060 1112**

For technical advice/questions, such as details on options available, management advice or how your option choices can contribute towards the Campaign for the Farmed Environment etc

Andrew Russell **0300 060 1929**

## Consultation on the Horticultural Use of Peat

Defra are currently inviting views on proposals for a new policy to reduce the horticultural use of peat in England.

Peat became the dominant material for horticulture and gardening in the 1970s, but since then the environmental impacts associated with peat extraction and the implications for biodiversity and climate change have been recognised. Building on progress that has already been made in reducing the use of peat and switching to good quality, peat free alternatives, this consultation proposes options for a future policy framework with the eventual goal of completely phasing out the horticultural use of peat in England.

This consultation is expected to be of particular interest to amateur gardeners; professional growers of fruit, vegetables and plants; growing media manufacturers; DIY retailers and garden centres; landscape gardeners; Local Authorities and the wider public sector.

Peat is a devolved area of policy and Defra will continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations on policies to promote the protection, careful management and restoration of peat across the UK.

The consultation deadline is 11th March 2011

For more details go to

[www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/peat/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/peat/)

## **Record Response to DEFRA's Natural Environment White Paper Consultation**

Over 15,000 people and organisations sent responses to a call for ideas on the Natural Environment White Paper, a record number for a Defra consultation, proving that people want to see a real positive change in the future of our natural environment.

The aim of the White Paper is to set out a clear framework for protecting and enhancing the things that nature gives us for free, which are too often taken for granted.

Work continues to develop the White Paper for publication in the spring. As part of this, more detail has now been published on Defra's thinking so far on biodiversity offsetting, where society is compensated for its environmental loss, by a developer paying to create or restore an area of habitat elsewhere. We would like to encourage people to give us their views on this potential approach.

Development is needed so that communities can grow and expand, but it can damage wildlife and habitats. Greater use of offsetting is one tool we could use to help us achieve a healthy natural environment.

Environment Secretary, Caroline Spelman said

"Finding innovative ways to protect and enhance our wildlife habitats is vital if we are to achieve the new targets to conserve the natural environment which were set in Nagoya last month. Offsetting could deliver a range of benefits such as helping to create bigger and better areas that allow our wildlife to thrive. We would be interested in views on how we might make greater use of this approach"

Biodiversity offsetting would not stop development or affect the rules about where development could or couldn't take place, nor will it weaken protection for species or make it easier to build on our most valuable conservation sites, but greater use of offsetting could help compensate society for biodiversity loss.

## **BMKBP Response**

Following the stakeholder consultation event at College Lake on 6th October, a detailed and full response to the Natural Environment White Paper Consultation was submitted by the Biodiversity Partnership.

Thank you to all those who attended the event or fed their comments into the draft response.

Our response can be downloaded from

[www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/sites/partnership/bmkbp/](http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/sites/partnership/bmkbp/)

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## **Biodiversity Offsetting Consultation**

In Defra's Business Plan, they commit to assessing the scope for action to offset the impact of development on biodiversity.

Go to

[www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/offsetting/index.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/offsetting/index.htm)

Defra would be grateful for any written comments by the end of January 2011.

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## **The Localism Bill**

The Localism Bill was introduced to Parliament on 13 December 2010.

The Government wants to decentralise power as far as possible. Localism isn't simply about giving power back to local government. This Government wants people to take charge of their lives and will push power downwards and outwards to the lowest possible level, including individuals, neighbourhoods, professionals and communities as well as local councils and other local institutions.

For more information go to

[www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill/)

## Chris Packham visits Wendover Schools

In the summer of 2009 Wendover CE Junior School and The John Hampden School Wendover were awarded a grant from Bucks Extended Services, to plant a woodland copse and wildflower meadow between the two schools.

This area complements other wildlife initiatives that the two schools have put in place, including a 14 tree mixed fruit orchard, a large pond, bird and bat boxes and two vegetable gardens. Over 500 children enthusiastically help maintain these areas and encourage everyone to save energy, recycle and walk to school on a regular basis. Both schools are involved in the Eco School Award system and Wendover Junior has been awarded the top award, a Green Flag, twice.

The Eco Coordinators, Sue Lipscomb and Siân Chattle have worked closely together to plan an area, which will not only be a haven for wildlife, but also an outdoor learning experience for the children and other members of the local community.



Pond dipping excitement

Photo Sian Chattle

On Saturday 5th December 2009 we joined up with BBC Breathing Places' Guinness World Record attempt for planting the most trees in an hour across Britain. Unfortunately the record was not broken, but over 40 families (165 people) from the two schools assembled on the playground to plant 172 native trees and whips in one hour! These included a 15 foot oak, cherry, field maple and rowan, all

grouped around an outdoor classroom, with wooden benches. Bark pathways join the classroom to the school playgrounds and a nearby wooden fort has been converted to provide a bird hide. A large wildflower meadow was also planted next to the woodland. This will, hopefully, attract a wide variety of insects, alongside thousands of native bulbs planted by the children. A competition was held in both schools to name the wildlife area and Wharf Wildflower Wood was appropriately named!



Chris Packham opens the wildflower meadow. Photo Sian Chattle

On Saturday 11th September we were thrilled to welcome the naturalist and broadcaster Chris Packham to open the new wildlife area.

Families from both schools listened to Chris, talk about the importance of wildlife areas such as this. He felt strongly that children nowadays need this type of rich learning environment in order to explore the world in which they live. He was full of praise for the commitment of both schools to outdoor learning.

Chris spent a long time talking to the families who had supported the event and everyone enjoyed exploring the new development and visiting the Green Fair that was taking place in the school grounds. There were stalls representing many local wildlife groups, including BBOWT, North Bucks Bat Club, Bucks Bird Club and Mid Bucks Beekeeping Association. Local craftsmen demonstrated traditional countryside crafts and children, parents and members of the local community were encouraged to turn their hands to some of these. Chris then ended a very successful day by giving two exciting and informative talks to packed audiences, which were illustrated by his stunning photography of wildlife.

## Funding Sources

### 3 grants available to local groups

#### GrantScape Community Greenspace Challenge

The GrantScape Community Greenspace Challenge is a c£500,000 grant programme designed to support local communities in creating enjoyable new outdoor greenspaces, including by transforming existing unloved areas.

It is specifically designed to benefit the environment both for people and for wildlife, supporting people's health, well-being and access to nature.

When taking decisions on grants to be awarded, GrantScape will prioritise applications received from groups where:

1. The initial idea has come from their local community; and
2. The project's design has been developed within their local community.

This scheme only covers a limited geographical area, but includes Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Grants are available for amounts between £20,000 and £75,000.

There is no requirement for match funding, nor for a Contributing Third Party (CTP) donation.

**The closing deadline for all applications to the GrantScape Community Greenspace Challenge is 12 noon on Monday 9th May 2011.**

Grantscape require that all applications have the agreement of a county ecologist so get in touch as soon as possible to discuss your applications

For more information go to

[www.grantscape.org.uk/grantshome/applyforagrant/gcgc](http://www.grantscape.org.uk/grantshome/applyforagrant/gcgc)

#### Opal Grants Scheme—Apply for grants of up to £5,000 to help your society

The OPAL Grants Scheme aims to help natural history societies and recording schemes grow and flourish. To date we have distributed grants totalling £112,000 to more than 50 different natural history groups.

The 2011 OPAL Grants Scheme focuses on the transfer of skills, to help enthuse and train the next generation of environmentalists.

#### Who can apply?

The Grants Scheme is open to all national and local natural history societies, recording schemes and similar groups that are active within England, including regional branches of national organisations. The group's primary focus must be biological. See the downloadable guidance notes for further details.

#### Sharing your skills

The theme of the 2011 Grants Scheme is 'Sharing your skills'. We aim to support projects that transfer knowledge and skills either between members of the group, or between the group and the wider community.

From informal public events to advanced training courses, funded projects should enable people to move a little way up the ladder of progression from complete beginner to expert.

#### How to apply

OPAL are now accepting applications for the 2011 OPAL Grants Scheme. **The deadline is Monday 7th February.**

For more information go to

[www.opalexplornature.org/SocietyFunding](http://www.opalexplornature.org/SocietyFunding)

## WREN Biodiversity Action Fund

The WREN Biodiversity Action Fund provides funding of between £75,000 and £250,000 to deliver biodiversity improvement projects .

The focus of work must always be the conservation improvements of an identified site or sites to benefit one or several BAP priority habitats. For example:

- The recreation of a BAP listed priority habitat
- Restoration or conservation of a BAP listed habitat
- Surveying/monitoring/on site research into a BAP listed habitat at a specified site or sites where this is part of on-site conservation work

Please note, applications can involve more than one site where there are clear and defined ecological links between sites and the habitat(s) being supported is the same for each site.

The primary intent of projects must be practical site based conservation work. WREN is able to fund Research/Monitoring and Survey work, but applicants must be able to demonstrate the clear intent to implement on site conservation work in addition to or as a result of these activities.

**The deadline for applications is 30th January 2011**

More info on the fund can be found at:

[www.wren.org.uk/apply/biodiversity-action-fund](http://www.wren.org.uk/apply/biodiversity-action-fund)

WREN require that all applications have the agreement of the relevant county BAP Co-ordinator so please contact Jez Elkin, Biodiversity Project Officer—[jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk) as soon as possible to discuss your applications.

## New Natural England Guides Bear Fruit For Orchards

Traditional orchards are a classic feature of the English landscape and are fantastic places for wildlife - but they have been disappearing at an alarming rate. More than 75% of traditional orchards in England have vanished since the 1950s.



Restoring and managing orchards is good for wildlife. Natural England has recently produced a series of guidance notes on different aspects of traditional orchard management. The guides are designed to provide practical advice to

land managers on how best to look after orchards in their care and are now available as PDFs on Natural England's website

[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about\\_us/news/2010/171210.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/news/2010/171210.aspx)

## Apple Day at Stowe a Great Success

The Mid Shires Orchard Group held the Apple Day 2010 at Stowe on November 14th. which was a roaring success. There were over 500 visitors, and 200 varieties of apple on display plus their new juice press and electric macerator on site( which are for hire to local groups or individuals.

For further information, please contact

Marcus Roberts: Tel. 01295 712272 or email: [mandm.roberts@ukgateway.net](mailto:mandm.roberts@ukgateway.net)

Andy Howard: Tel. 01295 810516 / 07950 006813 or email: [johoward@metronet.co.uk](mailto:johoward@metronet.co.uk)

# Events

## Mid Shires Orchard Group

**Sunday 9th January 11-3 Pruning course**  
Includes restorative, re-juvenative formative and Outdoor pruning at Home Farm (orchard) National Trust - Stowe Landscape Gardens (cost £25 members £ 35 non members) *Tutor - Andy Howard*

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2-5pm Wassailing Ceremony with Family fun activities** .National Trust - Stowe Landscape Gardens (*subject to weather*)

**Sunday 16th January 11.00 - 1.00 Rind Grafting / Top Grafting course** on Sunday 16th January 11-1 at Home Farm - National Trust - Stowe Landscape Gardens (cost £15 members £ 25 non members) *Tutor – Marcus Roberts*

**Saturday 29th January 11-3 Grafting course** (1) 11-3. Home Farm - National Trust - Stowe Landscape Gardens (cost £25 members £ 35 non members) all students get to take home three free trees. *Tutor - Andy Howard*

**Sun 13th February 10.30 – 2.30 Grafting course** (2) Home Farm - National Trust - Stowe Landscape Gardens (cost £25 members £ 35 non members) all students get to take home three free trees. *Tutor –Marcus Roberts*

Further info directions check out [www.msog.btik.com/](http://www.msog.btik.com/)

To reserve a place contact :

**Andy Howard 01295 810516 / 0795000681 johoward @metronet.co.uk (Places are limited)**

## Low Impact Living Initiative

**Fri 21st—Sun 23rd January Pruning and Care of Old Fruit Trees.** A weekend residential course which will provide participants with practical skills through hands-on experience of renovation pruning of apple trees. - Redfield, Winslow. Cost £190 high-waged, £170 waged, £150 unwaged (includes accommodation, meals and refreshments)

**Fri 11th—Sun 13th February Hedgelaying Training Course** Tutor Clive Leeke has been a professional hedgelayer for 20 years in and around Oxon, Berks and Bucks, working for farmers, large estates and organisations, including BBOWT, Northmoor Trust, National Trust and Crown Estates at Windsor Great Park. Redfield, Winslow. Cost £190 high-waged, £170 waged, £150 unwaged (includes accommodation, meals and refreshments)

For more info contact

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

**01296 714184**

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## Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)

BBOWT have released its "Developing Your Skills" winter training programme. Courses are free to BBOWT volunteers but are also open to anyone looking to learn more about wildlife.

The programme covers a wide range of topics including bird identification, badger surveying, practical skills and photography.

Find out more via the BBOWT website:

[www.bbowt.org.uk/content.asp?did=23622](http://www.bbowt.org.uk/content.asp?did=23622)

## Wycombe District Council Woodland Service

Winter has come early and hard in 2010 it seems that it was only a few weeks ago it left.... Meanwhile the Hebridean sheep are busily munching away at Brush Hill LNR. They are now on the main chalk grassland area having done a great job opening up our glade network. Over at Sands Bank LNR continuing the impetus from the Chilterns Conservation Board Scrub bash in January, we have 10 Dexter's cattle doing an equally fine job with the added bonus of poaching the soil & depositing their special thanks. This will benefit the site's rich invertebrate fauna as well as the chalk grassland flora. Our thanks to Robin Harman of Gravelly Grazing for his help with supplying the livestock.

Our Green Thursday Conservation Volunteer Group continues to grow but new recruits are always welcome. Recently we worked at Butterfly Conservation's reserve at Holtspur to give a hand or 40 to burn a huge pile of scrub.

Our main task for the coming months is a woodland margin project at Keep Hill Wood, High Wycombe. We will be felling and pollarding some of the larger trees and coppicing the understorey of Hazel, Ash and Sycamore to create a more structured and diverse margin. Other work will focus on scrub clearance at Chairborough LNR and ride widening at Castlefield & Rowliiff Wood LWS.

We have a busy programme of events for 2011, a selection are shown here, for more info visit our website [www.wycombe.gov.uk/woodlandservice](http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/woodlandservice).

There you can go to the homepages of many of our sites where interpretation material is free to download. In early 2011 we will be adding our new suite of 11 A3 full colour leaflets so keep an eye out for those.

If you are a local business or interested group who would like to organise a full or half day of hands-on, practical conservation we are happy to work with you. Please contact us for more information or to make arrangements.

**John Shaw**

**Woodland Service Team Leader**

## Events

### **Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January Brush Hill Work Party**

Lime plantation – stack cut wood. On Pheasants path cutting scrub margin to promote floristic diversity. Meet: 10am Whiteleaf Cross Public car park at the top of Peter's Lane, Princes Risborough HP27 0LQ (Grid ref: SP822035)

### **Sat 12<sup>th</sup> February Wildfowl, waders & winter migrants**

A flat, circular walk for all the family around a large gravel pit known locally for its variety of wildfowl, waders and winter visitors. Please bring binoculars if you have them. A spotting scope will be available for your use. Bring waterproofs and sturdy footwear. The track can get quite muddy. Approx 2.5 miles taking around 2.5 hours. **Booking event.** Meet 10am at Spade Oak Public Car Park, Coldmoorholme Lane, Nr Bourne End (off A4155) SL8 5PS (Grid ref: SU883 876)

### **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February Brush Hill Work Party**

Glade work - cut & burn scrub to enhance chalk grassland glades for flora and invertebrates. Meet: 10am Whiteleaf Cross Public car park at the top of Peter's Lane, Princes Risborough HP27 0LQ (Grid ref: SP822035)

### **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March Walking With Hares**

The walk takes us up onto one of the highest points of landscape in the area. Bring waterproofs and sturdy footwear. Approx 4½-5 miles taking around 2.5 to 3 hours. **Booking event.** Meet 10am at The Stag and Huntsman PH in Hambleden Grid ref: SU785 865

Adults: £4, Concessions: £2 Family ticket: £10

### **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> Brush Hill Work Party**

Work in Larch plantation extracting and stacking timber to help open up the woodland canopy.

Meet: 10am Whiteleaf Cross Public car park at the top of Peter's Lane, Princes Risborough HP27 0LQ (Grid ref: SP822035)

To book tel 01494 421825 or email

[woodland.service@wycombe.gov.uk](mailto:woodland.service@wycombe.gov.uk)

## What is the Bucks and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership?

The Partnership consists of organisations working together to promote and enhance nature conservation in Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes.

### A Buckinghamshire Partnership

Partners are as varied as our biodiversity. They include all tiers of local government including Bucks County Council, all of the district councils, Milton Keynes Unitary Authority and also Parish Councils.

Statutory agencies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission are all active members, as are the larger conservation charities such as Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, RSPB and the National Trust.

Local conservation organisations also play an important role—whether they are area based such as Chesham & District Natural History Society or focused on one particular aspect of biodiversity—such as Butterfly Conservation Thames Valley Group.

In all around 50 organisations are involved in the delivery of the Wildlife Sites Project and Biodiversity Action Plan, for example through supplying records to BMERC that can be used by the Wildlife Sites Project or by participation in the groups which are developing projects in Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

The Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Partnership is kindly funded by Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, Chiltern District Council, Environment Agency, Milton Keynes Council, Natural England, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council.

## Next Issue

The next issue will be produced in March. If you have an item, project or event that you would like to see included please send details to [jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk) by March 1st.

## Tell Us What You Think of Biodiversity News?

**We hope you have enjoyed Biodiversity News.**

We'd love to hear your feedback.

Please email [jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:jelkin@buckscc.gov.uk) with your comments

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## Contacts

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**Buckinghamshire  
& Milton Keynes  
Biodiversity Partnership**

[www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/bmkbp](http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/bmkbp)