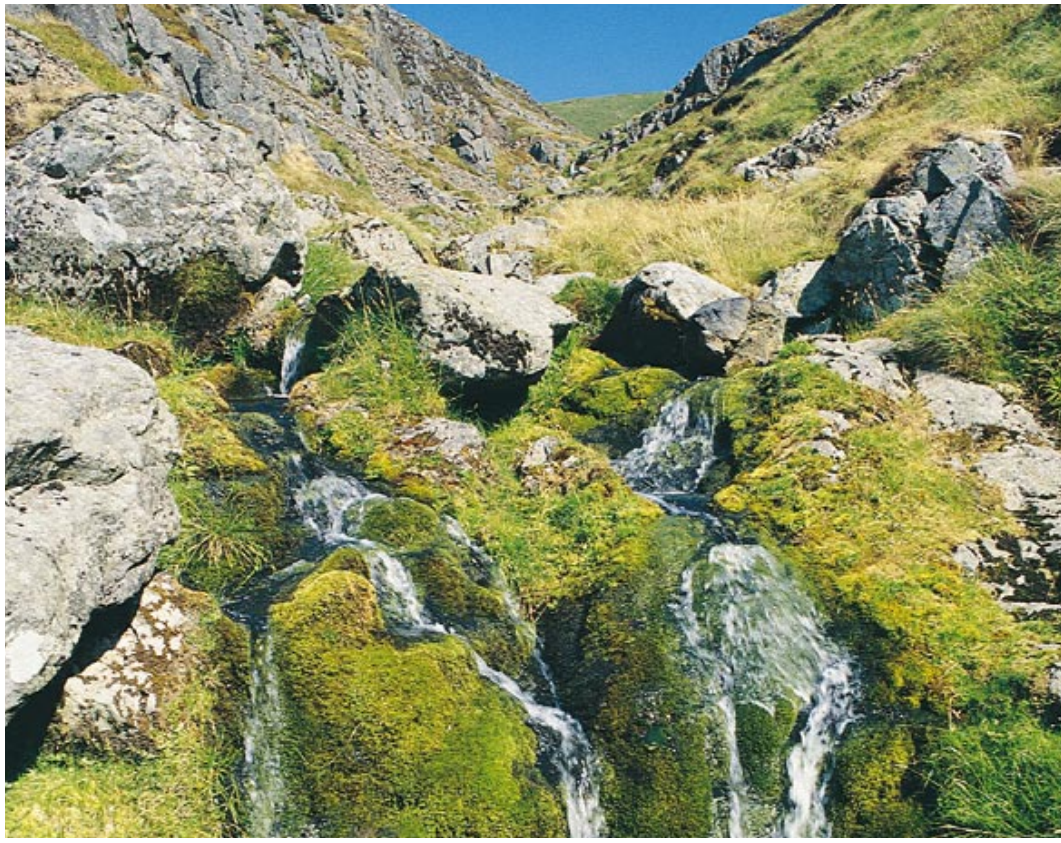
ENGLISH NATURE

Annual report

1 April 1999 - 31 March 2000



working today
for nature tomorrow

Cover photographs

main picture:

College Burn, Hen Hole, Cheviots SSSI, Northumberland
Peter Wakely/English Nature

small pictures top to bottom:

Frozen mountain tarn, Lake District
Paul Glendell/English Nature

Ainsdale NNR, Merseyside
Peter Wakely/English Nature

Cannock Extension Canal SSSI, Staffordshire
Peter Wakely/English Nature

Malham-Arncliffe SSSI, North Yorkshire
Peter Wakely/English Nature

Thorpe Wood LNR, Cambridgeshire
Peter Wakely/English Nature

Introduction

Wildlife gain is our mission at English Nature. We want to ensure that future generations can enjoy a wealth of wildlife as a major part of their quality of life. We also promote the protection and understanding of our geological heritage. We are the government advisers on wildlife, with powers and duties to protect and enhance the natural heritage throughout England.

Our work and advice are based on sound scientific understanding. We work with a wide range of partners, and we promote a sustainable development approach that seeks to place nature conservation at the heart of policy.

We own and manage many National Nature Reserves, which represent the very best of our natural heritage. There are over 200, covering around 820 square kilometres. Those we do not manage ourselves are looked after by carefully selected organisations, including government agencies, voluntary conservation organisations, local authorities and the private sector.

We have responsibility for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). These are places, mostly in private ownership, that are notified because of their special plants, animals or geological features.

There are currently well over 4,000 SSSIs, covering about 6% of the area of England. We work in partnership with about 32,000 SSSI owners or occupiers to maintain and enhance these special sites. There are rules and regulations about what can be done on SSSIs, but in most cases these reinforce existing good management. Through this site series, we contribute to fulfilling the UK's international obligations to select Natura 2000 sites (under the Habitats and Birds Directives) and Ramsar sites (under the Ramsar Convention on the conservation of wetlands).

Special sites alone are not enough to sustain England's biodiversity and geological resources. They cannot exist as isolated islands but need to be joined up as part of a wider network of wildlife corridors and habitat that we call the 'Lifescape'. This is landscape level conservation that is good for wildlife, economy and communities. This programme aims to restore degraded or impoverished landscapes in order to improve their life-supporting functions. This will contribute to meeting UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets and improve the quality of the environment for everyone.

Contents

More information about our work, including statistics on subjects in this report, can be found on our website.
www.english-nature.org.uk

Chairman's preface

It has been a year of landmarks for English Nature and conservation. Substantial additional funding, for which we thank Government, enabled us to increase our impact on English Nature's key priorities. We improved the extent and condition of SSSIs, pressed forward with the designation and management of Natura 2000 sites, especially in the marine environment, and progressed habitat and species targets in the Biodiversity Action Plan. The Species Recovery Programme is a jewel in conservation's crown, but the Biodiversity Action Plan still struggles for resources. In the marine environment, the Habitats Regulations have at last given a framework for effective management of special sites. It will be a major challenge to hone the use of the regulations in partnership with relevant authorities.

In all of this we demonstrated our fundamental values. We work from a clear and rational science base, and pushed forward the development and publication of our science strategy to show how we utilise science. We continued to act as a firm but fair regulator. We developed further openness in our work with a series of open meetings, and made more information including Council minutes available on our website. We enhanced our range of partnerships with 'co-conspirators' for conservation.

The outcome of the periodic review of water prices, AMP3, was a significant collaborative venture delivering substantial capital investment over the next five years for the remediation of abstraction and pollution impacts on almost 80 SSSIs. We played a major role in achieving that environment programme, together with the Environment Agency, OFWAT, Government and the water companies.

It has been a year of landmarks too in policy terms. The announcement of a major rise in agri-environment funding from modulation of mainstream CAP subsidy payments was a welcome step to more environment-friendly agriculture. But even with modulation, we still have over 90% of all public support to agriculture funding production patterns which are damaging to farmers, communities and wildlife. There is more to do to ensure all agriculture achieves at least minimum environmental standards, and to resolve the massive problems of overgrazing in the uplands. We

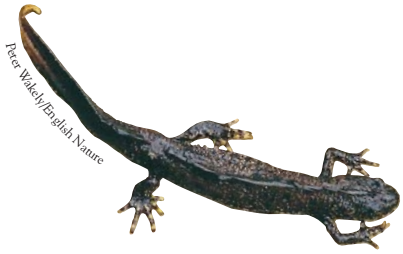
continued to take a rational but distinctive role over GM crops. And we played a key part in placing biodiversity conservation at the heart of sustainable development, with local, regional and national government, including Green Ministers, and increasingly with business. Green Ministers have committed to a biodiversity checklist as a guide for the work of their Departments and will report annually on its use. Biodiversity *is* a key test of sustainability. The environment is a key part of quality of life and central to a healthy economy.

An important success was, with others, promoting the first wildlife Bill for almost 20 years. The Countryside and Rights of Way Bill is now progressing through Parliament and will deliver increased ability for English Nature to work more effectively with the 32,000 owners and occupiers of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to deliver their more effective protection and management. With the Countryside Agency and others English Nature has also worked through the framing of the Bill to ensure that the welcome principle of increased access to the countryside is delivered in ways which respect biodiversity and environment interests.

Our earth heritage strategy laid out the priorities for geological conservation clearly and particularly stressed the need to use particular sites to demonstrate how geology underpins nature and how we can use the past to understand the future. But there is much more to do. Over 30% of our SSSIs are still in unfavourable condition. In upland areas, this rockets unacceptably to about 60%. The volume and complexity of effort required to achieve favourable conservation status for the expanding Natura 2000 series is substantial. We must also set our special sites in the framework of a more environmentally and socially vibrant wider countryside under our emerging Lifescapes programme. Making progress on these challenges will need energy, skill and partnerships, but also government support, resources and pairs of hands.

Late in the year, there was an organisational landmark. Derek Langslow, our Chief Executive, retired. Derek had worked tirelessly for conservation for his whole career, setting up English Nature in the early 1990s as an effective organisation and making a major mark, not least in driving forward the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. We thank him deeply and are delighted to see his contribution has been recognised by the award of a CBE. We welcome David Arnold-Forster, our new Chief Executive, and wish him all success in a busy and fruitful time building on the successes of the 1990s.

Barbara Young
Baroness Young of Old Scone
Chairman


Peter Wakely/English Nature

Special sites

Vital to our approach to nature conservation is the protection of a coherent network of special sites.

These safeguard for present and future generations the finest of England's wildlife and natural features. They provide safe havens for our biological resources and demonstrate the geological processes that shaped the Earth. Our objective is to maintain a series of special sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, that is well managed and in 'favourable condition'. Through this series of sites we help to fulfil the UK's international obligations under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives through the selection of Natura 2000 sites, and Ramsar sites (under the Ramsar Convention on the protection of wetlands).

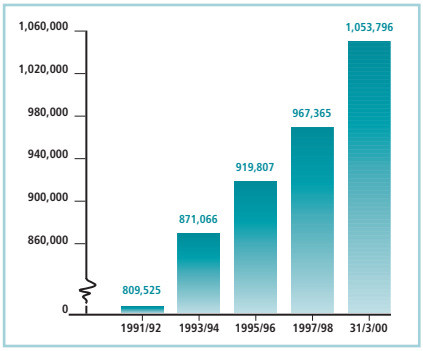
Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are the best sites for wildlife and geological features in England. They support many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and earth heritage features. All Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites on land are also first designated as SSSIs.

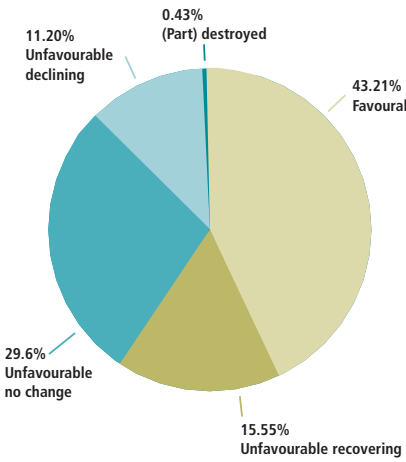
During 1999/2000 43 new SSSIs were notified, bringing the total to 4,088, covering 1,053,796 ha. New sites will continue to be notified to meet international obligations, or as a result of greater scientific knowledge.

Assessing the condition of SSSIs

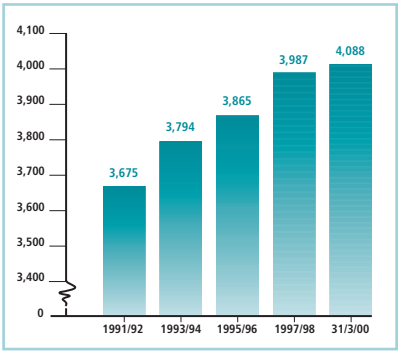
The condition of SSSIs is assessed using methods agreed at the UK level (Common Standards). This approach allows us to make assessments of the notified biological and geological features on each SSSI. To comply with the Common Standards programme we will assess the condition of every notified feature on every SSSI at least once every six years, according to the vulnerability of the site. English Nature began this programme on



Growth in area (ha) of SSSIs in England since 1991



Condition of SSSIs by area at 31 March 2000



Growth in number of SSSIs in England since 1991

Frozen mountain tarn, Lake District Paul Glendell/English Nature

1 April 1997, and we have now completed 55% of the condition assessments. We will complete the remaining 45% by March 2003. For the purposes of assessing SSSI condition each site is divided up into smaller areas called monitoring units. Therefore the 4,088 SSSIs consist of 21,636 monitoring units, each of which must be assessed at least once every six years. Last year English Nature staff carried out 6,277 condition assessment visits on 1,883 SSSIs.

As part of our drive to improve data on SSSIs, we are now able to provide information on the area of habitats within SSSIs. In the past we have only been able to give information based upon the number of SSSIs. To date, simple habitat information on about one third of the area of SSSIs has been computer mapped. In this report we publish the first estimate of the condition of habitat on SSSIs. The figures, derived from a 33% sample, are given in the adjacent table.

Condition of BAP broad habitat types within SSSIs

	Percentage of area* in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition	Percentage of area* in unfavourable no change or declining condition
Lowland woodland	79	21
Upland woodland	70	30
Lowland neutral grassland	77	23
Upland neutral grassland	78	22
Lowland calcareous grassland	76	24
Upland calcareous grassland	26	74
Lowland acid grassland	71	29
Upland acid grassland	38	62
Lowland heathland	75	25
Upland heathland	37	63
Fen, marsh and swamp	65	35
Bogs	34	66
Standing water and canals	68	32
Rivers and streams	35	65
Supralittoral rock	83	17
Supralittoral sediment	75	25
Intertidal mud/rock	82	18
Saltmarsh	66	34

* 0.43% of the total SSSI area was recorded as (part) destroyed. This data has been excluded from this table.

Of particular concern is the continuing poor condition of large areas of upland SSSIs, with over 70% of upland calcareous grassland and over 60% of upland heathland in unfavourable condition. However, this is not a consistent picture in the uplands, as over 75% of neutral grassland is in favourable condition. In the uplands neutral grassland is likely to be enclosed, and therefore not subject to the heavy grazing pressure of typically unenclosed calcareous grassland and heathland. This further illustrates the need for changing the way that grazing is managed in many parts of the uplands, for example through reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy.

Working with SSSI managers

Management agreements

English Nature works in partnership with owners and occupiers to maintain and enhance the condition of SSSIs. It is important to recognise the achievements of the managers of these areas, for without their involvement these benefits would not be possible. We continued to use Wildlife Enhancement

Kristoffer Hewitt/English Nature

Pevensey Wildlife Enhancement Scheme. One of the first WES schemes, it provides payments for maintaining wildlife interest of the ditches through stable water levels, rotational ditch management and reduced inputs on fields. This scheme was revised in 1999 to a two tier payment level. The higher tier is for those owners and managers that can control water levels. Most want to get into the higher tier and, through joint English Nature/Environment Agency work, it is hoped that the majority will be in the higher tier by the time the scheme is reviewed in 2002.

Management agreements* in place at 31 March 2000

No.	Area (ha)	Cost
2,773	137,977	£7,800,844

* Excluding leases and Nature Reserve Agreements

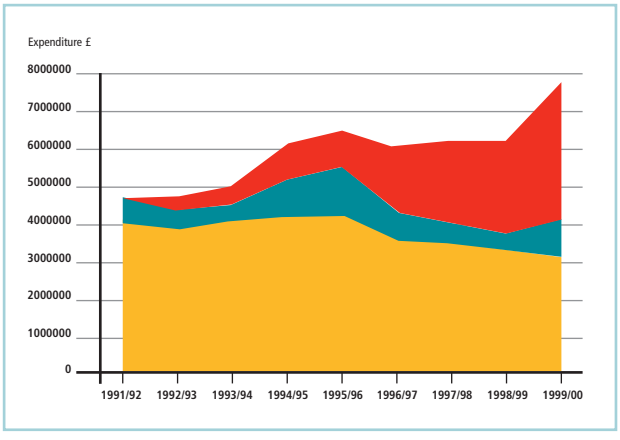
agreements as the preferred way to deliver our management agreement policy. These agreements are standard documents with standard payments for direct conservation management, designed to deliver specific wildlife outcomes. Experience has shown that SSSI owners and occupiers welcome this approach. With the additional funding made available to us this year, we were able to put more resources into this area of work to achieve more benefits for wildlife.

An important development during the year was the requirement from the European Commission to notify our management agreements as State Aids. This means that our agreements will now comply with the 'Community Guidelines for State Aids in the Agricultural Sector'.

Land purchase grants

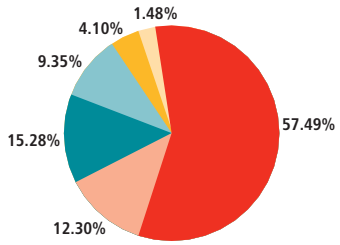
The increase in our Grant-in-aid has enabled us to give more grant support to enable others to acquire land of importance for nature conservation.

During the last year we have made twelve such grants, amounting to a total of £231,414. Besides providing grants to enable the voluntary conservation organisations to extend their ownership of SSSI land, land purchase grants have been used to contribute towards the habitat

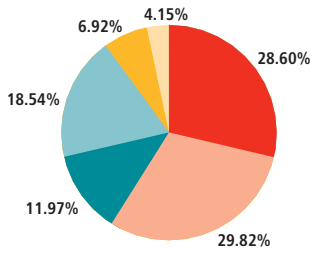


Change in management agreement expenditure since 1991

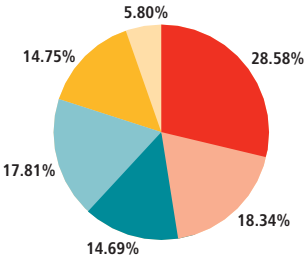
Management agreements 1999/2000



Management agreements by area



Management agreements by number



Management agreements by cost

KEY

Wildlife enhancement:
- Natura 2000
- Other SSSIs

Other positive agreements:
- Natura 2000
- Other SSSIs

Compensatory agreements:
- Natura 2000
- Other SSSIs

Legal action

An example of where we have pursued legal action to protect SSSIs:

Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI, Berkshire - Prosecution under Section 29

Motor-cycling was occurring on part of Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI without the landowner's permission. As a result of the activities more than 40% of the area known as Poors Allotments had been damaged. English Nature applied to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, for a Nature Conservation Order (NCO) under Section 29 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, which prohibited anyone from carrying out listed operations on the site, including the use of vehicles, without first giving notice to English Nature

Following the making of this order, five motorcyclists were apprehended on the site and prosecuted. They were fined a total of £675 with £300 costs awarded to English Nature.

action plans under the Biodiversity Action Plan. Grants of £50,000 each to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust to acquire land at Upton Broad, and to the Essex Wildlife Trust to acquire land on the Blackwater Estuary illustrate this ability to assist our partners. We also give advice on the applications received by the Heritage Lottery Fund, who are able to provide very substantial land purchase grants.

Reserves Enhancement Scheme

Our Reserves Enhancement Scheme provides support to smaller conservation organisations who own and manage SSSIs to assist with habitat management costs, increase the participation of volunteers and improve the opportunities for visitors to enjoy the sites. This year £1,121,104 was spent working with 35 partner organisations.

Legal action taken to protect SSSIs

English Nature secures the conservation of wildlife and geological features on SSSIs through the implementation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. In the majority of cases SSSIs are well managed and in favourable condition through the stewardship of their owners and managers. However, there are instances when English Nature is forced to undertake more formal action to protect SSSIs.

In determining enforcement action English Nature will:

- consider the best interests of nature conservation
- apply consistent standards to all cases
- consider every case individually.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

Ponies grazing at Thompson Common SSSI, Norfolk. The Reserves Enhancement Scheme has contributed towards scrub clearance and grazing to maintain open conditions.

Prosecution in a court of law is a last resort. A decision to proceed with a prosecution rests with the Chief Executive or Director, and takes into account professional legal advice. Prosecution action complies with guidance from government on the principles of accountability, independence, impartiality and consistency. During the year 20 solicitors letters were sent, and five formal investigations were undertaken. Successful prosecutions were taken as a result of damage occurring on three SSSIs, and seven Nature Conservation Orders and Special Nature Conservation Orders were issued. Details of these and of damage occurring on SSSIs this year are published on our web site.

Peter Wakely/English Nature

Yare Broads and Marshes, Norfolk, part of the Broads candidate SAC

International sites

The process of identification, selection and classification of international sites in England has continued. This year we approach the end of the major designation phases both for Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive and Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) under the Habitats Directive.

In the 20 years since the Birds Directive came into force, 79 SPAs have been designated in England. During 1999/00 English Nature contributed to the UK review of the SPA site series, resulting in the publication by government of the full UK SPA site series - a list of all the terrestrial SPAs that have been, or are proposed to be, classified. During the year four of these sites (and three major extensions to existing sites) were classified in England, and there are now 10 sites (and seven extensions) outstanding.

SACs are designated under the EC Habitats Directive. During 1999 the European Commission began the process, known as 'moderation', that considered whether the sites submitted by all Member States would adequately meet the requirements of the Directive. The Commission decided that further sites were needed for a number of species and habitats. For much of this year English Nature has been collecting and collating data to allow submission to government of a list of recommended new SACs. This was done at the end of the year, and public consultation on the proposed new sites will now follow.

The designation phase of international site work is a major undertaking, which has absorbed considerable resources. The levels of casework on international sites rose markedly through the year, as the obligations of the Habitats Regulations 1994 (the legal instrument that transposes the obligations of the European Directives into national law) become clearer. An important amendment to the Regulations passed through Parliament at the end of the year, which extends the legal protection of sites so that candidate SACs are now protected as if they were SACs.

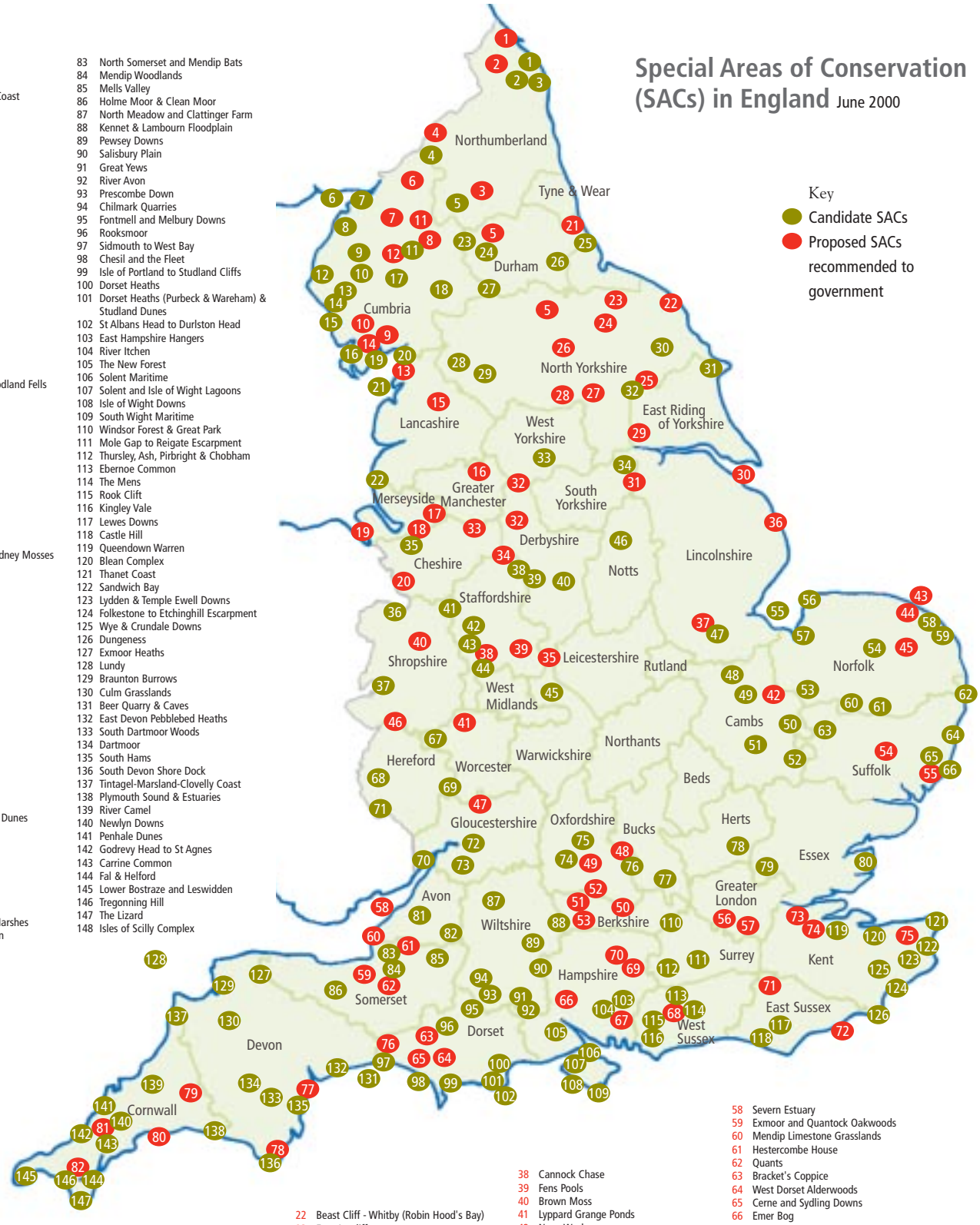
A major exercise this year has been the 'Review of Consents' - reviewing all extant permissions and consents against the requirements of the Regulations -

Continued on page 12

Peter Wakely/English Nature

Flamborough Head - Bempton Cliffs SPA, East Riding of Yorkshire

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in England June 2000



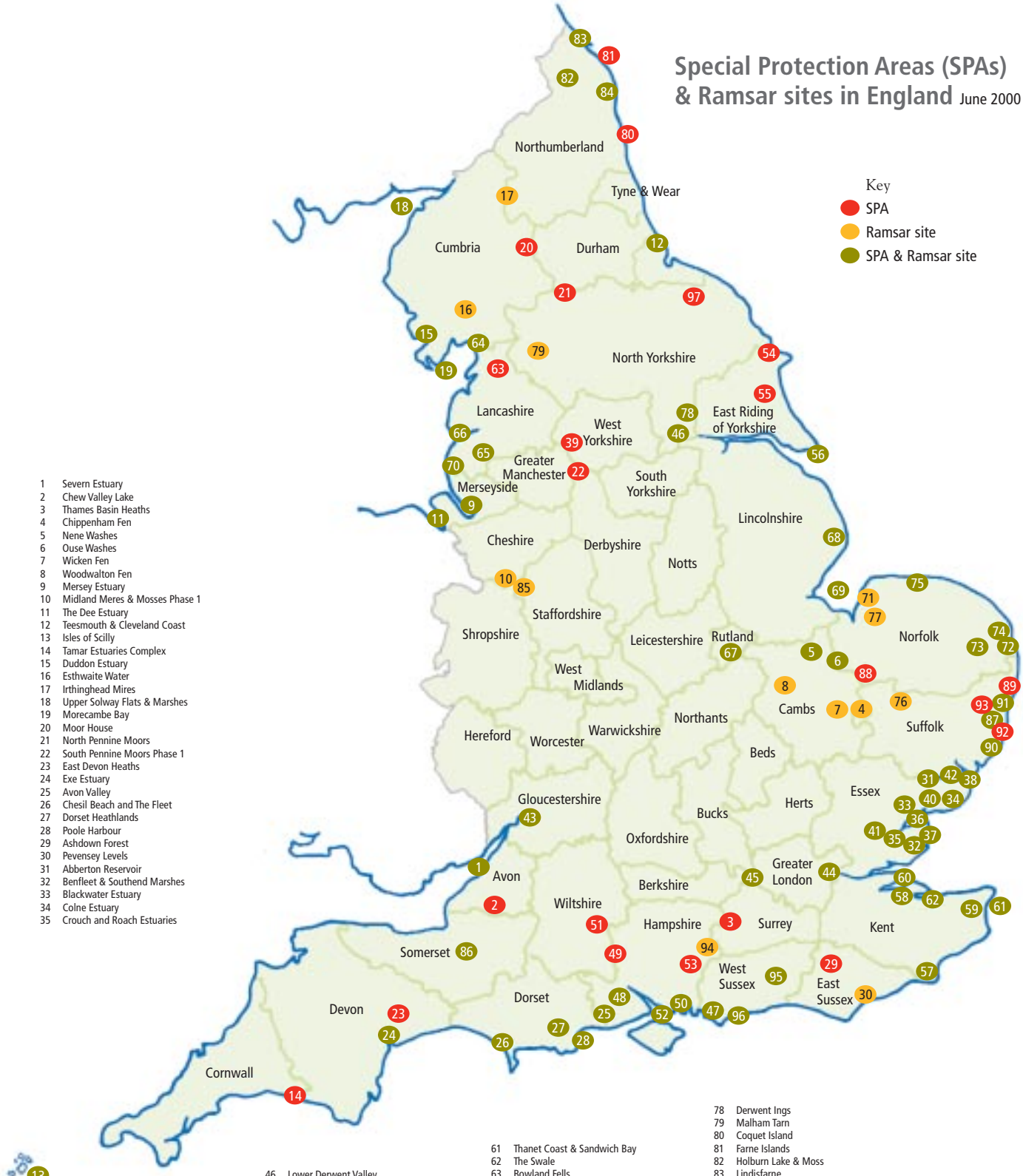
Candidate SACs

1 Berwickshire & North Northumberland Coast
2 North Northumberland Dunes
3 Newham Fen
4 Border Mires, Kielder - Butterburn
5 Tyne and Allen River Gravels
6 Solway Firth
7 Solway Mosses
8 Clints Quarry
9 River Derwent & Bassenthwaite Lake
10 Borrowdale Woodland Complex
11 River Eden
12 River Ehen
13 Wast Water
14 Wasdale Screes
15 Drigg Coast
16 Duddon Mosses
17 Helvellyn and Fairfield
18 Asby Complex
19 Roudsea Wood & Mosses
20 Morecambe Bay Pavements
21 Morecambe Bay
22 Sefton Coast
23 Bollihope, Pikestone, Eggleston and Woodland Fells
24 Moor House - Upper Teesdale
25 Castle Eden Dene
26 Thrislington
27 North Pennine Dales Meadows
28 Ingleborough Complex
29 Craven Limestone Complex
30 Ellers Wood & Sand Dale
31 Flamborough Head
32 Lower Derwent Valley
33 Denby Grange Colliery Ponds
34 Thorne Moor
35 Oak Mere
36 Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Mosses
37 The Stiperstones and The Hollies
38 Peak District Dales
39 Peak District Dales Woodlands
40 Gang Mine
41 West Midlands Mosses
42 Pasturefields Salt Marsh
43 Mottey Meadows
44 Cannock Extension Canal
45 Ensor's Pool
46 Birklands and Bilhaugh
47 Grimsthorpe
48 Barnack Hills & Holes
49 Orton Pit
50 Fenland
51 Portholme
52 Devils Dyke
53 Ouse Washes
54 Norfolk Valley Fens
55 The Wash & North Norfolk Coast
56 North Norfolk Coast and Gibraltar Point Dunes
57 Roydon Common & Dersingham Bog
58 Winterton - Horsey Dunes
59 The Broads
60 Breckland
61 Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens
62 Benacre to Easton Bavents Lagoons
63 Rex Graham Reserve
64 Minsmere to Walberswick Heaths and Marshes
65 Staverton Park and The Thicks, Wantisden
66 Orfordness - Shingle Street
67 Downton Gorge
68 River Wye/Afon Gwy
69 Bredon Hill
70 Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites
71 Wye Valley Woodlands
72 Cotswold Beechwoods
73 Rodborough Common
74 Cothill Fen
75 Oxford Meadows
76 Chilterns Beechwoods
77 Burnham Beeches
78 Wormley - Hoddesdonpark Woods
79 Epping Forest
80 Essex Estuaries
81 Avon Gorge Woodlands
82 Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats
83 North Somerset and Mendip Bats
84 Mendip Woodlands
85 Mells Valley
86 Holme Moor & Clean Moor
87 North Meadow and Clattinger Farm
88 Kennet & Lambourn Floodplain
89 Pewsey Downs
90 Salisbury Plain
91 Great Yews
92 River Avon
93 Prescombe Down
94 Chilmark Quarries
95 Fontmell and Melbury Downs
96 Rooksmoor
97 Sidmouth to West Bay
98 Chesil and the Fleet
99 Isle of Portland to Studland Cliffs
100 Dorset Heaths
101 Dorset Heaths (Purbeck & Wareham) & Studland Dunes
102 St Albans Head to Durlston Head
103 East Hampshire Hangers
104 River Itchen
105 The New Forest
106 Solent Maritime
107 Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons
108 Isle of Wight Downs
109 South Wight Maritime
110 Windsor Forest & Great Park
111 Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment
112 Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham
113 Ebernoe Common
114 The Mens
115 Rook Clift
116 Kingley Vale
117 Lewes Downs
118 Castle Hill
119 Queendown Warren
120 Blean Complex
121 Thanet Coast
122 Sandwich Bay
123 Lydden & Temple Ewell Downs
124 Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment
125 Wye & Crundale Downs
126 Dungeness
127 Exmoor Heaths
128 Lundy
129 Braunton Burrows
130 Culm Grasslands
131 Beer Quarry & Caves
132 East Devon Pebblebed Heaths
133 South Dartmoor Woods
134 Dartmoor
135 South Hams
136 South Devon Shore Dock
137 Tintagel-Marsland-Clovelly Coastal Complex
138 Plymouth Sound & Estuaries
139 River Camel
140 Newlyn Downs
141 Penhale Dunes
142 Godrevy Head to St Agnes
143 Carrine Common
144 Fal & Helford
145 Lower Bostraze and Leswidden
146 Tregonning Hill
147 The Lizard
148 Isles of Scilly Complex

Proposed SACs
recommended to government

1 Tweed Estuary
2 Ford Moss
3 Roman Wall Loughs
4 River Tweed
5 North Pennine Moors
6 Bolton Fell & Walton Mosses
7 Cumbrian Marsh Fritillary Site
8 Helbeck and Swindale Woods
9 River Kent
10 Subberthwaite, Blawith and Torver Low Commons
11 Tyne and Nent
12 Ullswater Oakwoods
13 Witherslack Mosses
14 Yewbarrow Woods
15 Calf Hill and Cragg Woods
16 Rochdale Canal
17 Manchester Mosses
18 Rixton Clay Pits
19 Dee Estuary/Aber Afon Dyfrdwy
20 River Dee and Bala Lake
21 Durham Coast
22 Beast Cliff - Whitby (Robin Hood's Bay)
23 East Arncliffe
24 North York Moors
25 River Derwent
26 Ox Close
27 Strensall Common
28 Kirk Deighton
29 Skipwith Common
30 Humber Estuary
31 Hatfield Moor
32 South Pennine Moors
33 Mobberley and Oversley Ponds
34 Bee's Nest & Green Clay Pits
35 River Mease
36 Saltfleetby - Theddlethorpe Dunes & Gibraltar Point
37 Baston Fen
38 Cannock Chase
39 Fens Pools
40 Brown Moss
41 Lyppard Grange Ponds
42 Nene Washes
43 Overstrand Cliffs
44 Paston Great Barn
45 River Wensum
46 River Clun
47 Dixton Wood
48 Aston Rowant
49 Little Wittenham
50 Hartslock Wood
51 River Lambourn
52 Hackpen Hill
53 Kennet Valley Alderwoods
54 Dews Ponds
55 Alde, Ore & Butley Estuaries
56 Richmond Park
57 Wimbledon Common
58 Severn Estuary
59 Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods
60 Mendip Limestone Grasslands
61 Hestercombe House
62 Quants
63 Bracket's Coppice
64 West Dorset Alderwoods
65 Cerne and Sydling Downs
66 Emer Bog
67 Butser Hill
68 Duncton to Bignor Escarpment
69 Woolmer Forest
70 Shortheath Common
71 Ashdown Forest
72 Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach
73 North Downs Woodlands
74 Peters Pit
75 Stodmarsh
76 River Axe
77 Dawlish Warren
78 Blackstone Point
79 Phoenix United Mine and Crow's Nest
80 Polruan to Polperro
81 Breney Common and Goss and Tregoss Moors
82 St Austell Clay Pits

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) & Ramsar sites in England June 2000



1 Severn Estuary
2 Chew Valley Lake
3 Thames Basin Heaths
4 Chippenham Fen
5 Nene Washes
6 Ouse Washes
7 Wicken Fen
8 Woodwalton Fen
9 Mersey Estuary
10 Midland Meres & Mosses Phase 1
11 The Dee Estuary
12 Teesmouth & Cleveland Coast
13 Isles of Scilly
14 Tamar Estuaries Complex
15 Duddon Estuary
16 Esthwaite Water
17 Irthinghead Mires
18 Upper Solway Flats & Marshes
19 Morecambe Bay
20 Moor House
21 North Pennine Moors
22 South Pennine Moors Phase 1
23 East Devon Heaths
24 Exe Estuary
25 Avon Valley
26 Chesil Beach and The Fleet
27 Dorset Heathlands
28 Poole Harbour
29 Ashdown Forest
30 Pevensey Levels
31 Abberton Reservoir
32 Benfleet & Southend Marshes
33 Blackwater Estuary
34 Colne Estuary
35 Crouch and Roach Estuaries
36 Dengie
37 Foulness
38 Hamford Water
39 South Pennine Moors Phase 2
40 Old Hall Marshes
41 River Crouch Marshes
42 Stour & Orwell Estuaries
43 Walmore Common
44 Lee Valley
45 South-West London Waterbodies
46 Lower Derwent Valley
47 Chichester & Langstone Harbours
48 New Forest
49 Porton Down
50 Portsmouth Harbour
51 Salisbury Plain
52 Solent & Southampton Water
53 Wealden Heaths
54 Flamborough Head & Bempton Cliffs
55 Hornsea Mere
56 Humber Flats & Marshes
57 Dungeness to Pett Level
58 Medway Estuary & Marshes
59 Stodmarsh
60 Thames Estuary & Marshes
61 Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay
62 The Swale
63 Bowland Fells
64 Leighton Moss
65 Martin Mere
66 Ribble Estuary
67 Rutland Water
68 Gibraltar Point
69 The Wash
70 Alt Estuary
71 Dersingham Bog
72 Breydon Water
73 Broadland
74 Great Yarmouth North Denes
75 North Norfolk Coast
76 Redgrave and South Lopham Fens
77 Roydon Common
78 Derwent Ings
79 Malham Tarn
80 Coquet Island
81 Farne Islands
82 Holburn Lake & Moss
83 Lindisfarne
84 Northumbria Coast
85 Midland Meres & Mosses Phase 2
86 Somerset Levels & Moors
87 Alde-Ore Estuary
88 Breckland
89 Benacre Broad to Easton Bavents
90 Deben Estuary
91 Minsmere-Walberswick
92 Orfordness-Havergate
93 Sandling Heaths
94 Thursley & Ockley Bog
95 Arun Valley
96 Pagham Harbour
97 North York Moors

Sea caves within the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Marine SAC

Peter Wakely/English Nature

that is required of all competent authorities under the Habitats Regulations. English Nature is conducting a review, and is co-operating closely with the Environment Agency in its own major review.

Marine Special Areas of Conservation

Work on international sites also covers the implementation of Natura 2000 in the marine environment. This programme will enable us for the first time to characterise and effectively manage the finest of England's habitats and species on the seashore and in the sea.

The UK Marine SACs LIFE project, an inter-agency project led by English Nature, was set up in 1996 to kickstart the marine SACs programme in the UK. The project set up 12 demonstration sites around the UK to explore the problems of identifying, managing and monitoring marine SACs. This experience has led to guidance being produced and promoted for others, both in the UK and in Europe.

Under the Habitats Regulations English Nature must provide to relevant authorities conservation objectives and a list of operations likely to cause damage for all Natura 2000 sites. In England there are 16 marine SACs where sound partnerships are developing, 12 of which have approved Regulation packages in place.

Paul Glendell/English Nature

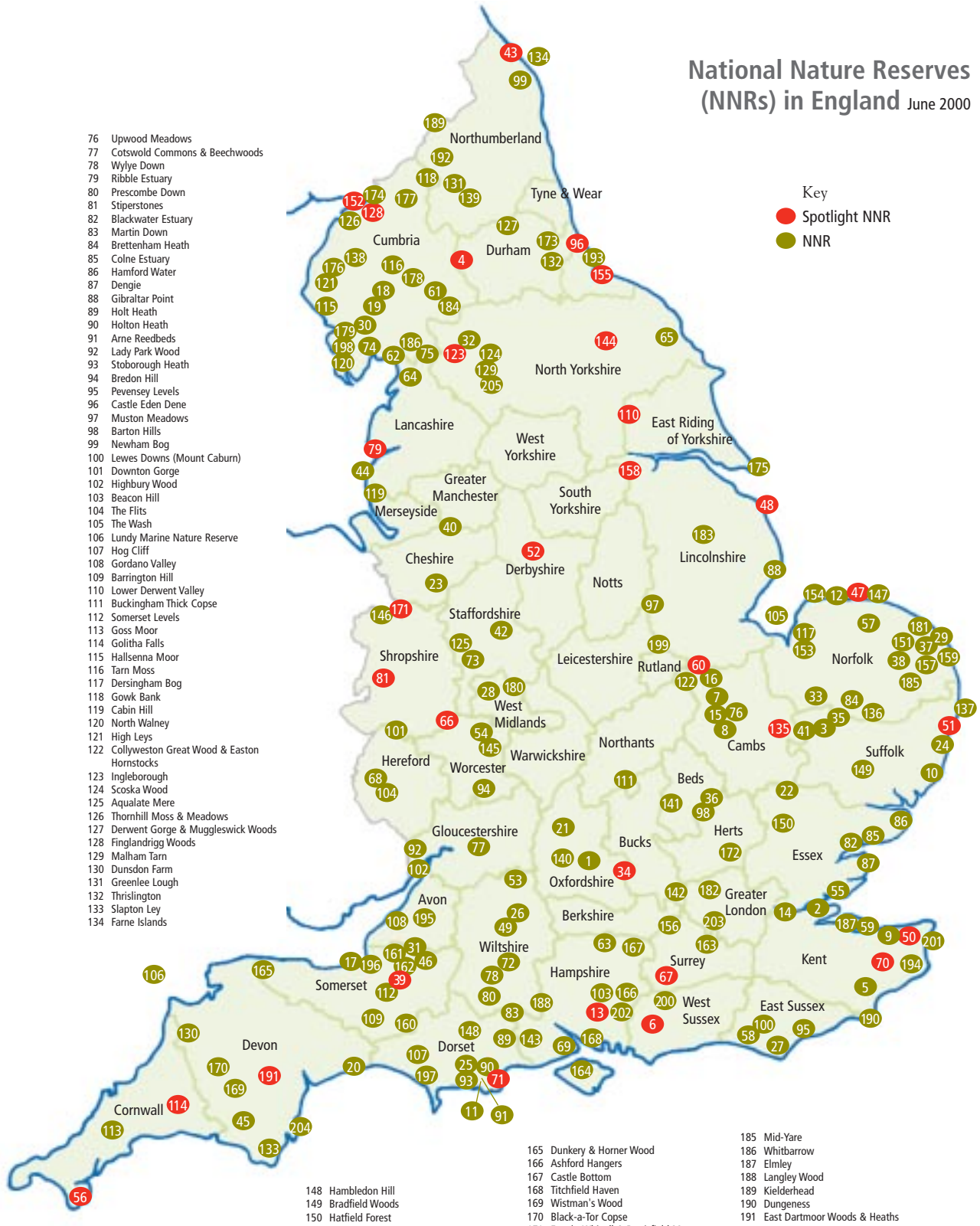
Foundry meadow, Ebernoe, West Sussex, one of four new NNRs declared during the year.

National Nature Reserves

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) offer people the opportunity to experience some of the very best of England's natural habitats, species, and geology. Our aim is to ensure that they are well managed, contribute to meeting biodiversity targets and play an increasing role in the leisure activities of the general public. Our visitor programmes help to develop public appreciation and understanding of the countryside and the role of nature conservation in improving our quality of life.

At 31 March 2000 there were 202 NNRs in England covering 82,082 ha, of which English Nature manages 60,278 ha. 65 NNRs are wholly or partly managed by an approved body. Through our Capital Grant Scheme we help approved bodies to enhance the condition of these NNRs. Last year, the scheme spent £82,289 on improving nine NNRs. During the year we declared four new NNRs and one extension. Details of NNRs are available on our web site www.english-nature.org.uk.

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in England June 2000



1 Cothill
2 High Halstow
3 Cavenham Heath
4 Moor House - Upper Teesdale
5 Ham Street Woods
6 Kingley Vale
7 Holme Fen
8 Monks Wood
9 Blean Woods
10 Orfordness - Havergate
11 Hartland Moor
12 Scolt Head Island
13 Old Winchester Hill
14 Swanscombe Skull Site
15 Woodwalton Fen
16 Castor Hanglands
17 Bridgwater Bay
18 Blelham Bog
19 North Fen
20 Axmouth-Lyme Regis Undercliffs
21 Wychwood
22 Hales Wood
23 Wybunbury Moss
24 Westleton Heath
25 Morden Bog
26 Fyfield Down
27 Lullington Heath
28 Wren's Nest
29 Winterton Dunes
30 Rusland Moss
31 Rodney Stoke
32 Ling Gill
33 Weeting Heath
34 Aston Rowant
35 Thetford Heath
36 Knocking Hoe
37 Hickling Broad
38 Bure Marshes
39 Shapwick Heath
40 Rostherne Mere
41 Chippenham Fen
42 Chartley Moss
43 Lindisfarne
44 Ainsdale Sand Dunes
45 Dendles Wood
46 Ebbor Gorge
47 Holkham
48 Saltfleetby - Theddlethorpe Dunes
49 Pewsey Downs
50 Stodmarsh
51 Walberswick
52 Derbyshire Dales
53 North Meadow, Cricklade
54 Chaddesley Woods
55 Leigh
56 The Lizard
57 Swanton Novers
58 Castle Hill
59 The Swale
60 Barnack Hills & Holes
61 Great Asby Scar
62 Clawthorpe Fell
63 Ashford Hill
64 Gait Barrows
65 Forge Valley Woods
66 Wyre Forest
67 Thursley
68 Moccas Park
69 North Solent
70 Wye
71 Studland & Godlingston Heath
72 Parsonage Down
73 Mottey Meadows
74 Roudsea Wood & Mosses
75 Park Wood
76 Upwood Meadows
77 Cotswold Commons & Beechwoods
78 Wylye Down
79 Ribble Estuary
80 Prescombe Down
81 Stiperstones
82 Blackwater Estuary
83 Martin Down
84 Brettenham Heath
85 Colne Estuary
86 Hamford Water
87 Dengie
88 Gibraltar Point
89 Holt Heath
90 Holton Heath
91 Arne Reedbeds
92 Lady Park Wood
93 Stoborough Heath
94 Bredon Hill
95 Pevensey Levels
96 Castle Eden Dene
97 Muston Meadows
98 Barton Hills
99 Newham Bog
100 Lewes Downs (Mount Caburn)
101 Downton Gorge
102 Highbury Wood
103 Beacon Hill
104 The Flits
105 The Wash
106 Lundy Marine Nature Reserve
107 Hog Cliff
108 Gordano Valley
109 Barrington Hill
110 Lower Derwent Valley
111 Buckingham Thick Copse
112 Somerset Levels
113 Goss Moor
114 Golitha Falls
115 Hallsenna Moor
116 Tarn Moss
117 Dersingham Bog
118 Gowk Bank
119 Cabin Hill
120 North Walney
121 High Leys
122 Collyweston Great Wood & Easton Hornstocks
123 Ingleborough
124 Scoska Wood
125 Aqualate Mere
126 Thornhill Moss & Meadows
127 Derwent Gorge & Muggleswick Woods
128 Finglandrigg Woods
129 Malham Tarn
130 Dunsdon Farm
131 Greenlee Lough
132 Thrislington
133 Slapton Ley
134 Farne Islands
135 Wicken Fen
136 Redgrave & Lopham Fen
137 Benacre
138 Bassenthwaite Lake
139 Muckle Moss
140 Chimney Meadow
141 King's Wood, Heath & Reach
142 Burnham Beeches
143 Kingston Great Common
144 Duncombe Park
145 Foster's Green Meadows
146 Wem Moss
147 Blakeney
148 Hambledon Hill
149 Bradfield Woods
150 Hatfield Forest
151 Ant Broads & Marshes
152 South Solway Mosses
153 Roydon Common
154 Holme Dunes
155 Teesmouth
156 Chobham Common
157 Ludham - Potter Heigham
158 Humberhead Peatlands
159 Martham Broad
160 Hardington Moor
161 Westhay Moor
162 Ham Wall
163 Ashtead Common
164 Newtown Harbour - Isle of Wight
165 Dunkery & Horner Wood
166 Ashford Hangers
167 Castle Bottom
168 Titchfield Haven
169 Wistman's Wood
170 Black-a-Tor Copse
171 Fenn's, Whixall & Bettisfield Mosses
172 Broxbourne Woods
173 Cassop Vale
174 Drumburgh Moss
175 Spurn
176 Sandy Beck Meadows
177 Walton Moss
178 Cliburn Moss
179 Duddon Mosses
180 Sutton Park
181 Calthorpe Broad
182 Ruislip Woods
183 Bardney Limewoods
184 Smardale Gill
185 Mid-Yare
186 Whitbarrow
187 Elmley
188 Langley Wood
189 Kielderhead
190 Dungeness
191 East Dartmoor Woods & Heaths
192 Kielder Mires
193 Durham Coast
194 Lydden Temple Ewell
195 Leigh Woods
196 Huntspill River
197 Valley of Stones
198 Sandscale Haws
199 Cribbs Meadow
200 Ebernoe Common
201 Sandwich & Pegwell Bay
202 Butser Hill
203 Richmond Park
204 Berry Head
205 New House Farm, Malham

Paul Glendell/English Nature

Wheelchair user birdwatching from special access boardwalk at Saltfleetby NNR, Lincolnshire, one of our Spotlight Reserves.

Every year we publish a list of guided walks on NNRs. During the year we held well over 100 events on NNRs throughout England, ranging from glow worm hunting at Aston Rowant to a rough terrain walk over the limestone pavement at Great Asby Scar. Two NNRs, Ainsdale and Castle Eden Dene, now have full time community officers to raise the profile of the reserves in the local community and to inform local people about reserve management. We would like to thank all the volunteers who play a significant part in managing and monitoring our NNRs.

We have selected 31 NNRs that have a special attraction for and a capacity to cope with many visitors. To further the opportunity for the public to enjoy these 'Spotlight Reserves' we have spent £75,000 this year to improve access and provide interpretation. About 20% of the NNRs that we manage now provide easier access and some facilities for disabled or special needs visitors. We are continuing to develop these facilities wherever possible.

We monitor the condition of NNRs using the same standards applied to all other SSSIs. Some NNRs, or more often some parts of NNRs, are in unfavourable condition due to external factors outside our control, such as overgrazing on common land, or the effects of groundwater abstraction. To address these issues we are working with MAFF and the Environment Agency towards action at the broader policy level. At 31 March 2000 74% of our NNRs were in favourable condition, with appropriate management schemes in place on a further 14% which will return them to favourable condition in the next few years.

NNRs provide important opportunities for the demonstration of nature conservation management techniques, and during the year over 200 events were held for current and potential land managers, including farmers, local groups and university students. These range from on-site discussion of good practice to full-scale demonstration of specialised equipment.

Local Nature Reserves

Accessible natural open space, such as that provided by Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), is important for local biodiversity and for our quality of life. Over two thirds of LNRs are urban or urban fringe and, therefore, potentially accessible to a large part of the population. English Nature recommends that people living in towns and cities should have LNRs provided at a minimum level of one hectare per thousand population.

English Nature wants to encourage high standards of management and site interpretation on existing LNRs and to encourage the declaration of more LNRs. We launched a grant scheme in 1999 to help LNR managers to realise the potential these sites offer for both people and wildlife.

The LNR Grant Scheme aims to:

- make LNRs more accessible to the local community
- increase the knowledge and enjoyment of local people
- encourage local people to do more to help look after LNRs
- increase the value LNRs have for nature conservation in England
- make better use of LNRs for schools.

We offer up to 25% of project costs or £5,000, whichever is the greater. Applicants can also include volunteer time to gain up to 80% of their matched funding. This helps to ensure local communities are involved in the projects.

The £80,000 spent on 66 grants last year has generated about four times as much in matched funding.

Of these (projects covered more than one project type):
21% improved access to LNRs
25% involved interpretive material
13% encouraged educational use for all sectors of the local community
13% involved public events on LNRs
32% delivered gains for BAP species and habitats
29% involved other habitat management work - gains for local wildlife.

There were nine LNRs declared during the year. A full list can be found on our web site www.english-nature.org.uk

LNRs are given one of three classifications: **Urban** are surrounded on all sides by built up areas; **Urban fringe** are within 1km of a built up area; **Rural** are in the countryside.

% of LNRs in England classed as	
Urban	27
Urban fringe	47
Rural	26

People and wildlife

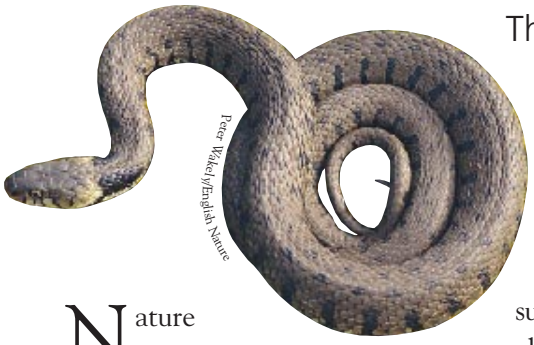
Local Nature Reserves fit within our wider programmes to ensure people can experience wildlife and take action on its behalf. We aim to encourage people to help English Nature make a difference by clearly illustrating how nature conservation is relevant to people's lives. Wildlife is all around us and ultimately we depend on it for the provision of natural resources. We recognise and celebrate the natural world as a source of inspiration for the arts. Local Nature Reserves are one opportunity for bringing people and wildlife closer together.

Leeds City Council

Leeds City Council

Special needs students from John Smeaton Community High School, Leeds, pond dipping at Golden Acre Park, which adjoins Breary Marsh LNR. The educational facility was grant aided by English Nature's LNR Grant Scheme.

Biodiversity



Peter Wakely/English Nature

The term 'biodiversity' refers to the variety of habitats, and the plants and animals they contain, throughout the world's land and seas.

Nature conservation is about safeguarding and enhancing this rich variety. Biodiversity is a measure of the general health of our countryside.

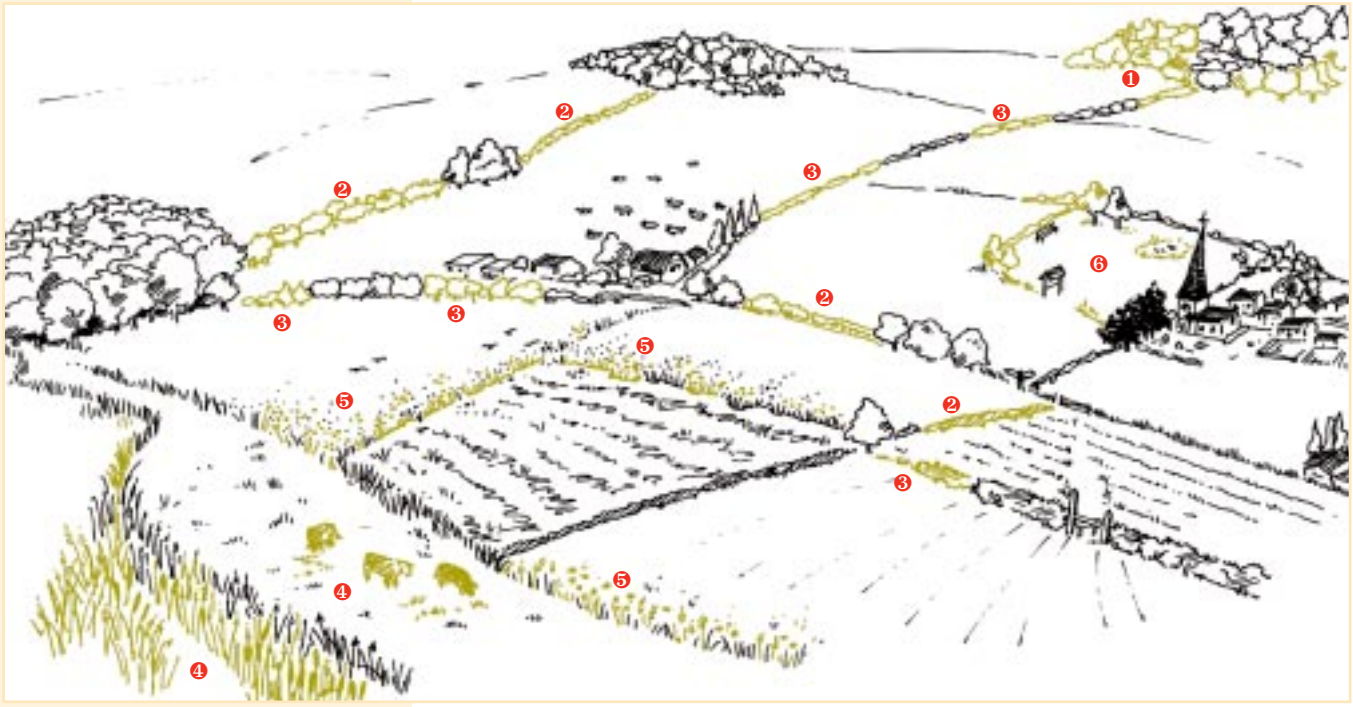
Since the signing of the Rio Convention in 1992, and the publication of *Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan* in 1994, action plans have been published for 45 priority habitats and over 400 species. Implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) is central to English Nature's vision of a sustainable and biologically diverse natural environment that is essential to everyone's quality of life.

English Nature takes action for biodiversity within the framework of Natural Areas, our way of dividing the country up into areas of discrete ecological character. Natural Areas help to identify where habitats and species are nationally important, and enable us to target our efforts more effectively. The aim is to increase biodiversity where it can be sustained and contribute to local character, for example heathland in Dorset and white-clawed crayfish in the Lake District.

Tony Hamblin/FLPA

Although special sites are our national treasures, we are also concerned with the health of biodiversity between these sites. Without connecting up the special sites, wildlife will continue to be degraded. These 'wildlife corridors' link special sites, and provide opportunities for species to move, particularly as climatic conditions change. Within individual Natural Areas we face the question of where best to recover, restore and re-create those habitats and species of conservation concern. 'Lifescapes' are the approach we have taken to tackle this question.

Ainsdale NNR, Merseyside. Paul Glendell/English Nature



The Lifescapes concept

❶ Increase size of small, isolated woodland to benefit mammals and birds. eg Woodland Grant Scheme

❷ Plant corridor hedgerows to connect woods for birds and mammals. eg Countryside Stewardship

❸ Reduce gap size in hedges, for birds, insects, bats. eg Countryside Stewardship

❹ Improve condition of SSSIs or Wildlife Trust reserves eg Wildlife Enhancement, Reserves Enhancement Scheme, Water Level Management Plan

❺ Cereal field margins for benefit of arable wildflowers, insects, farmland birds, and as important corridors. eg Countryside Stewardship, and advisory service to owners.

❻ Popular community area enhanced for wildlife by volunteers. eg bats, wildflowers.

Lifescapes are about the living and changing dimension of our landscapes and their habitats. They are a development of the Natural Areas defined by English Nature to help target effort to secure gains for wildlife in the wider countryside. Lifescapes will:

- join up the dots of our special sites with wildlife corridors through which species can move, making sites more ecologically viable;
- help protect special sites by creating buffer zones to guard against threats such as pollution or water level changes;
- create more wildlife friendly farmed landscapes within which special sites sit;
- provide flexibility for wildlife to adapt to climate change effects;
- help provide the habitat matrix essential for the well being of the 20% of BAP species that are mainly found outside special sites, such as farmland birds;
- help target and focus the use of agri-environment scheme resources to give best conservation value for money;
- provide social and economic benefits such as employment, cultural identity, heritage value, brand marketing, and new product opportunities from native species.

Much remains to be done at government level to improve England's biodiversity. Progress on many fronts in the future will be determined by how quickly policies on, for example, agriculture, water, coastal defence, take into account biodiversity priorities. There is also the need for more information on many of the habitats and species, and this impedes implementation and decision making.

In 1999 the Biodiversity Programme budget was £1.29 million.

Maritime habitats and species

This year we published the maritime Habitat and Species Action Plans. Included in these were Species Action Plans for small dolphins, baleen and toothed whales, the basking shark and a number of marine invertebrates. There were also plans covering habitats as diverse as maerl beds, vegetated shingle and saltmarsh.

English Nature has already begun work on six of the habitats, including saline lagoons and vegetated shingle on which we lead. Work includes research into the potential for restoring soft cliff habitats that have been subject to sea defences, re-creation of saline lagoon habitat and working with local communities to find the best management for sand dune habitat.

Chris Gibson/English Nature

Sea campion

Terrestrial and freshwater habitats

Seventeen habitat plans concentrated on achieving tangible benefits in habitat management, restoration and (re)creation on the ground. Reedbed work on the Somerset Levels and elsewhere contributed to the meeting of 90% of the Habitat Action Plan target for rehabilitation, and 25% of the target for creation. The 'Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage' programme, co-ordinated by English Nature and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has also started a range of projects with private, public and voluntary sector partners across the UK. This will attain over half the restoration target and a third of the recreation target for this habitat.

In support of our biodiversity work, we published booklets on acid grassland and limestone pavements, and contributed to a research project looking at sustainable livestock grazing on a range of priority lowland grassland types.

Heather planting

This former conifer plantation is being re-created as heathland as part of 'Back to purple: conserving and restoring The Stiperstones'. This is a 'Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage' project run jointly by English Nature, Forest Enterprise and Shropshire Wildlife Trust, with the help of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Community (European Regional Development Fund) and Tarmac (through the Landfill Tax Environmental Credits Scheme).

Kirsten Mould/Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Planting of heather on the former Gatten Plantation at The Stiperstones National Nature Reserve

Recovery successes

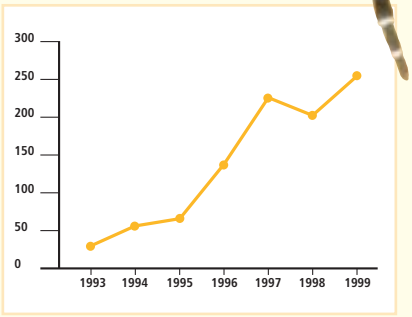
Stone-curlew

Tony Hamblin/FLPA

Working in partnership since 1985 the English Nature/RSPB Breckland stone-curlew project has increased the number of breeding pairs in the Natural Area to 142 in 1999. The target for Breckland is 130 pairs by 2000.

Ladybird spider

Peter Merritt



Ladybird spider population at its sole site in Dorset has increased from some 20 individuals in 1993 to over 200 in 1999. However, the lack of suitable habitat for the spider remains an issue.

Species Recovery

The Species Recovery Programme started in 1991 to save rare or threatened species from extinction in England. In 1999 80 species were added to the programme, making a total of 286, of which 67 are England priorities. A major emphasis during the year was on partnership with Plantlife, RSPB, Leeds University, county wildlife trusts, private sector and other voluntary organisations. In February 2000 a meeting of those participating in Species Recovery was held at the Natural History Museum to exchange knowledge and celebrate successes. Over 170 people attended, representing nearly 100 organisations, businesses and charities.

In addition to the public and voluntary sectors, private estates play an important role in species recovery. Examples include the Harewood Estate in the red kite programme and the Clinton Devon Estate work on lowland heath, southern damselfly and silver-studded blue butterfly.

The Species Recovery Programme makes a significant contribution to the delivery of SAPs and action for other priority species. Achievements of the programme include advances in genetic and ecological knowledge, the development of survey and monitoring methods and the development of management techniques. There have also been many achievements in direct species conservation. For example:
Calcium corynellum, a church yard lichen, saved from extinction;
Blue ground beetle *Carabus intricatus*, re-established at six former sites;
Carex muricata ssp muricata, a sedge, two new sites found doubling the UK population;
Perennial knawel populations maintained and increased, and successfully reintroduced to three sites - all published targets achieved;
Greater horseshoe bat, increases in population size.

Habitat Action Plans in England

Priority habitats	45
Habitats where English Nature is the lead partner of which eight were reported on during 1999/2000	15
English Nature HAPs showing progress towards targets	6 of 8
English Nature HAPs where action is underway	8 of 8

Species Recovery in England

Species covered by BAP or SRP	530
Species for which English Nature is the lead partner	93
Species for which English Nature is the contact point	237
BAP species actioned through SRP during 1999/2000	219
Other England priority species actioned through SRP during 1999/2000	67
% of SRP species showing progress against targets	67%
% of SRP species where action is underway	93%

Peter Wakely/English Nature

Ancient oak at Calke Park SSSI, Derbyshire

Veteran Trees Initiative

Veteran trees are those that, because of their great age, size or condition, are of exceptional value culturally, in the landscape, or for wildlife. Veteran trees are critically important for many forms of wildlife, including rare lichens, roosting bats, nesting birds and many different species of insects and fungi.

The Veteran Trees Initiative came to a close this year after four years, during which it produced a range of publications, organised workshops and demonstration days, raising awareness with owners of parks and other pasture sites and advising them on how to conserve these valuable trees.

Chris Gibson/English Nature

Dryad's saddle - a large bracket fungus found on the trunks of broadleaved trees

A partnership project, the Initiative successfully brought together a range of organisations. The Biodiversity Action Plan for Wood Pasture and Parkland will take forward a number of the issues raised by the Initiative, including a wood pasture and parkland database. English Nature has also funded one of the partners, the Ancient Tree Forum, to promote veteran tree issues over the coming year.


Peter Wakely/English Nature

Influencing change

Bringing conservation to the heart of policy is essential to successful delivery of biodiversity.

Most spheres of human activity have a potential or real impact on the condition of special sites, and also on the general biodiversity of the countryside between them. English Nature works with those people whose activities and policies have an impact on wildlife, for example government departments, Regional Development Agencies and private companies, to minimise negative impacts and maximise wildlife gains. We promote a sustainable development approach, and seek to integrate nature conservation at the heart of policy, ensuring that it has at least an equal place alongside the social and economic aspects of development.

At the European level, English Nature has played a leading role in the initial preparations of a European Union Sustainable Development Strategy. In November, we participated in the Sustainable Development 21 Conference in Helsinki. The conference conclusions informed the EU Council Summit in December and set the framework for the development of an EU Strategy. In the UK, English Nature gave evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee on this issue.

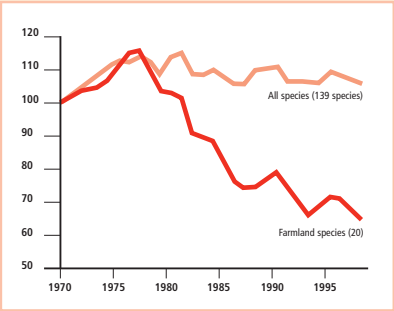
At a national level we are working closely with the Sustainable Development Unit at the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) to promote awareness and understanding across government. We gave presentations on 'biodiversity as a key test of sustainable development' at a seminar for government officials (the Green Ministers' officials group), and two seminars for Associate Bodies within the DETR 'family'.

In partnership with DETR we produced a Biodiversity Checklist for Green Ministers. The checklist provides a framework against which government departments can measure progress in the next Green Ministers' annual report.

We have begun a programme of seminars to train our local teams on the initiatives and policy implications contained in DETR's *A better quality of life - a strategy for sustainable development for the UK* (May 1999).

Cannock Extension Canal SSSI, Staffordshire Peter Wakely/English Nature

Farmland birds



Source: The State of the UK's Birds 1999

A 'Quality of Life' Indicator

Information from national bird monitoring schemes, gathered in partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology and RSPB, shows that most of the bird species that specialise on farmland have suffered marked population declines in recent decades. The plight of farmland birds was recognised by the selection by DETR of a 'farmland bird index' within the Quality of Life indicator for biodiversity. The combined population trends of 20 species that are strongly associated with farmland show a 40% decline between the mid-1970s and 1998. Whereas, the all-species index has been stable. A growing number of detailed studies has suggested a very strong link between the declines of individual farmland bird species and the changes in agriculture that have occurred over the same period.

At the regional level, English Nature is at the forefront of providing environmental guidance to steer and influence regional development. We have secured the inclusion of biodiversity objectives and targets in the regional planning guidance, which will steer future regional development. We published Regional Biodiversity Indicators, to complement the Quality of Life Indicators in *A better quality of life*. Response has been very positive. We are working with Regional Development Agencies and others on positive programmes to benefit economy and environment, such as sustainable alternatives to peat.

We have produced an analysis for each of 12 sectors that have an impact on wildlife and natural features:
Agriculture
Coastal defence
Domestic, commercial and industrial development of land
Forestry
Electricity generation
Minerals and aggregates
Ports
Rural and coastal recreation
Sea fisheries
Inland transport
Waste
Water

The following are highlights of achievements in working with some of these sectors last year.

Agriculture

80% of England is under some sort of agricultural regime. Most SSSIs depend on agricultural management for their existence, so the potential is enormous for both damage and benefit. English Nature wants to see a thriving agriculture sector that delivers profit for farmers, good quality food for consumers and wildlife for everyone.

Outside SSSIs biodiversity is still under threat from agricultural intensification. Important features of the agricultural landscape include hedgerows, rivers and ponds, all of which are declining through removal, neglect or pollution. Pesticides add further pressure. This loss of habitat has a knock on effect on the plants and animals that depend on them. One fifth of the BAP rarest plants are arable wildflowers. 24 out of 28 birds of arable and mixed farming are declining severely, a fact that has influenced their selection by government as a 'quality of life' indicator.

Corncockle

Hugh Clark/FLPA

Contrasts in Swaledale. The picture below shows a typical, heavily grazed moor edge with severely suppressed short heather. The picture to the right shows good, bushy flowering heather.

English Nature

English Nature

English Nature, as the statutory adviser to MAFF on nature conservation, has been closely involved in the consultation process 'A new direction for agriculture' about the implementation of the Agenda 2000 reforms to the Common Agricultural Policy. We have pressed for changes in five areas:

- Increased funding for Rural Development Plans
- Environmental conditions applied to all agricultural subsidies
- Improved management of arable and set aside land
- Introduction of a new scheme for extensive beef farming
- Reform of the Less Favoured Areas payments.

In December 1999 MAFF announced changes to the emphasis of subsidies. Two percent will be taken from production subsidies in 2000 and matched by funding from the Treasury to be used for agri-environment schemes. This figure will increase to 4.5% by 2006. Added to existing commitments, this results in about £1 billion over seven years being directed towards biodiversity goals through Countryside Stewardship, which will grow fourfold, and the Organic Farming Conversion scheme, which will triple in size.

Currently about 60% of SSSIs in the uplands are in unfavourable condition (see table on p.6), mainly due to inappropriate grazing management. We continue to press hard for a change from subsidy based on the number of animals (headage payment) to one based on area of land. We are working with the National Farmers Union, MAFF and others on ways of achieving this whilst maintaining the social and economic fabric of upland farming on which so much of our landscape and wildlife depends.

Conservation techniques

English Nature co-ordinates representatives from the twenty wildlife organisations who make up FACT (the Forum for the Application of Conservation Techniques). Two hundred land managers attended the first English Nature funded FACT conference in September 1999. There are four FACT initiatives:

The Grazing Animals Project, formed to develop better ways of using grazing animals to improve the management of wildlife sites;

John Bacon/English Nature

an ECO-Ads exchange and mart magazine for wildlife commodities such as machinery and labour;

the Practical Solution Handbook containing 70 pages of tools, equipment and techniques for improved management of land for wildlife;

John Bacon/English Nature

and the Machinery Rings Information Pack which encourages shared use of machinery.

Hanson agreement

In February 2000 we signed an agreement with Hanson that will bring many benefits to SSSIs affected by their operations. Hanson have agreed to make no new applications that could cause damage to SSSIs and will reconsider dormant permissions. They will work with English Nature to manage their SSSIs positively for wildlife, and will integrate biodiversity targets and Natural Area objectives into all restoration and aftercare schemes. We will look to address the issue of damage to SSSIs caused by current operations with all operators in the coming year.

Genetically modified crops

The effect on biodiversity of growing genetically modified crops is largely unknown, and we have pressed for scientific studies to determine this before any decision is taken about their commercial introduction. We have welcomed the fact that our advice has been heeded, and have briefed Government at the highest levels, given evidence to parliamentary enquiries and met with US Embassy officials and researchers. We sit on the Scientific Steering Committee for the DETR-funded field-scale evaluations and also advise the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission on the wider implications of new technology on the environment. Farm-scale trials are now underway on three GM crops, but with a large number of proposed GM crops in the pipeline, there is still much research to be done.

Working with individual farmers

We have funded research by Cheltenham and Gloucester College on farm conservation advice, looking at increasing our role in working with farmers. Our wildlife enhancement management agreements have shown a commitment to working directly with farmers for wildlife gain, and in some areas these schemes are the biggest providers of support on SSSIs. We are working with Sainsbury's and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and have contributed money to a scheme to fund Farm Biodiversity Action Plans on all farms that supply Sainsbury's.

Minerals and aggregates

The extraction of minerals such as coal, peat, china clay, crushed rock, and sand and gravel has a massive impact on SSSIs. English Nature seeks to halt or reduce extraction

Peter Wakely/English Nature

Clawthorpe Fell NNR, Cumbria - Quarrying threat in background

where it affects SSSIs and push for maximum wildlife gain in the restoration and afteruse of these sites. We are concerned about the direct loss of habitats, and the indirect impacts of operations sited next to SSSIs.

In April 1999 we published *Biodiversity and minerals*, a good practice guide for planners, site managers and restoration managers in the minerals industry, in which we explained the concept of biodiversity and Natural Area objectives.

In July 1999 we began research into the impacts of mineral extraction on SSSIs, the results of which will feed into government policy development.

We held discussions with the Treasury and the minerals industry about measures to alleviate the environmental impacts of quarrying. A voluntary package was preferred by the industry and, while we welcomed many of the potential commitments in it, we remained concerned that the voluntary approach would not halt damage to SSSIs. A tax on aggregate extraction was subsequently announced in the March 2000 Budget, with the revenue from this tax to be used for environmental improvements. We are discussing the most appropriate way to target these funds.

Fisheries

The main focus of our attention has been the 2002 review of the Common Fisheries Policy. Currently it emphasises the social and economic aspects, and has little regard for the environment and the detrimental effects of fishing on wildlife. These effects include general overfishing, destruction and disturbance of the seabed, continued catches in lost nets and accidental catches of, for example, dolphins. An inter-agency group seeks to influence European and national policy. English Nature is focusing on a way to manage fisheries that takes account of the marine environment as a whole eco-system, rather than concentrating on fish species or stock levels. We have worked in partnership with the fishing industry and others to develop the no-take zone concept in the South West as a means of conserving fish stocks and habitat.

Bottlenose dolphin

Michael Gore/FLPA

Rivers project

Bob Gibsons/Natural Image

English Nature has secured a grant of £737,750 from the European LIFE Nature Fund for a four-year partnership project on seven candidate SAC rivers in the UK. The Cumbrian Eden and the Salisbury Avon are the main rivers which will benefit in England.

River Avon with water-crowfoot

Fresh water

The main concern for English Nature is the continued impact on wetland SSSIs from lowered water levels and pollution. The lowered water levels are caused by drainage and by overabstraction from natural underground sources. The pollution falls into two categories - 'point source' pollution from industrial discharges and sewage works and 'diffuse pollution', especially from agriculture. Our policy, as published in *Wildlife and fresh water – an agenda for sustainable management (1997)*, is to halt or reduce these impacts and to restore the condition of SSSIs. English Nature was successful in getting schemes to restore water levels or halt sewage pollution included in the third Periodic Review of water company spending (AMP3). The final determination in November 1999 included investment on 76 SSSIs, amounting to over £150 million over the next five years. We have emphasised to DETR and the Environment Agency the need for investigations on 32 sites to be completed as a matter of urgency, so that remedial action to protect wildlife can be secured by 2005, as envisaged in government guidance.

We have started a project aimed at reducing pollution from agriculture. Excessive loads of nutrients promote algal growths and lead to the loss of submerged flowering plants that provide food and shelter for many aquatic animals. High sediment losses from agricultural land smother the spawning beds of salmon and other fish species, and create unsuitable conditions for water-crowfoot beds and many invertebrates. Regulation, incentives, advice and awareness, economic instruments and product quality assurance schemes are all being considered in the project, and we have commissioned a feasibility study on setting up a water protection zone in the catchment of a river candidate SAC.

Coastal defence and managed realignment

Climate change and the natural action of the sea on the coast means that it does not remain static but changes, with some parts being eroded and others being built up. Sea defences, built to protect land from flooding or erosion, are very expensive to maintain or make effective against rising sea levels. They can have serious effects on other parts of the coast, for example by depriving them of eroded material for beaches and mudflats. English Nature supports the principle of managed realignment of the coast, which means leaving it to

find its own natural position, and recognising that it will change over the years. The combination of rising sea levels and hard defences has led to the loss of mudflat and saltmarsh habitats as they are squeezed against the wall. To achieve the BAP targets for these two habitats it is estimated that over the next 15 years 740 ha per year of coast will have to be realigned. The total achieved over the last three years has been only 6 ha, illustrating the size of the problem.

Our main success in this area during last year has been in securing £1.4 million funding over four years for a LIFE project, led by English Nature, to resolve conflicts, for example where a freshwater habitat is being protected by sea defence that threatens a maritime habitat. This project 'Living with the sea' has two other partners – the Environment Agency and the Centre for Coastal and Marine Science.

Forestry

Ancient woodland in England suffers from isolation, neglect and replanting with conifers. English Nature wants to see more native woods, the expansion of existing woods, the linking of fragments, improved management in neglected woods and restoration of previously ancient woods that have been planted with conifers. During the year the results of the sample survey of woodland SSSIs were published. While only 34% of the surveyed area was in favourable condition, recent improvements in management meant that a further 28% was recovering. However, 85% of ancient woods are not SSSIs, so we are looking to see if more can meet designation criteria, and for changes in local authority policies and DETR guidelines to improve their protection.

Our key partner in this sector is the Forestry Commission, whose active work for biodiversity we welcome. During the year we:

- advised them on the development and implementation of the Woodland Grant Scheme and an additional scheme to reverse fragmentation of ancient woodland
- agreed biodiversity objectives, within the England Forestry Strategy, for woodland habitat types by Natural Area
- advised on the restoration of ancient sites that have been planted with conifers.

Limestone pavement project

Simon Webb/English Nature

English Nature, Forest Enterprise and Cumbria Wildlife Trust are working in partnership to restore limestone pavement habitats in South Cumbria though woodland management and felling of a quarter of a million conifers to recreate limestone grassland, as part of a £500,000 LIFE project.

Whitbarrow pavements, Cumbria

Scientific development


Michael Boughton/ GIF

Scientific information and knowledge underpins our nature conservation activities.

Science is central to our work on the designation and protection of special sites, and informs our policy advice to government and others. It is also vital in our work on habitats, species and earth heritage features outside designated sites, not least in the context of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and our own Species Recovery Programme and Earth Heritage Strategy.

Science Review

1999 was the 50th anniversary of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which established the institutional framework for nature conservation in Britain. This anniversary has given us cause to reflect upon the role science plays in our work. The senior figures in the relatively young and small community of ecologists in the late 1940s, such as Sir Arthur Tansley, Charles Elton and Sir Julian Huxley, played a key role in defining the early goals of statutory nature conservation and the methods to be adopted. It is not surprising that science figured prominently in this early legislation. For example, National Nature Reserves were at first envisaged as being selected for their research value, not just their intrinsic ecological or earth heritage properties.

Since 1949 our legislative responsibilities and duties have grown. At the same time our scientific responsibilities have remained relatively unchanged. Inevitably science has become part of a much larger and more varied range of conservation activity. As a consequence a reassessment of our scientific activities was appropriate, to ensure that this work is still in step with our direct nature conservation activities. Therefore, in 1999 a review of the role that science should play in our work was carried out. As part of this, we held a range of consultations with Council Members and staff, and with our partners, including voluntary conservation organisations, government departments and representative organisations.

Malham-Arncliffe SSSI, North Yorkshire Peter Wakely/English Nature

The consultation confirmed wide agreement that our primary role is the conservation of wildlife and geology, and that all our scientific activities should support this work. The more specific comments we received were wide ranging, and group into four main areas:

1. **Management of research and development**. There is a wish for wider consultation and greater transparency concerning our research programme. We already work closely with a wide range of organisations on the planning and execution of specific projects, and will be extending this to include consultation over the broader context of our research and development. We will be holding a number of workshops every year to discuss key areas for future research.

2. **Partnership.** Working in partnership with, for example, the Forestry Commission, MAFF and the Environment Agency is already a key part of our research and development and other scientific activities. However, we need to look more closely at developing closer relationships with bodies such as the Research Councils, particularly in areas of strategic science planning and development. In 1999, along with a wide range of partnership activity, we have been an active participant in the Biodiversity Research Working Group, convened by DETR, which draws together many of the organisations who fund biodiversity-related research in Britain.

3. **Organisational competence.** Our achievement and reputation rest very largely upon the knowledge of our staff, who are especially skilled at converting the results of scientific research and knowledge into practical guidance for land managers and policy makers. The scientific and technical aspects of our work are constantly developing, so we must ensure that our staff keep their knowledge and skills up to date. We also need to ensure that we have the right range of expertise, including specialist staff who have a significant reputation among their peers in the scientific community. As the largest employer of conservation professionals in the UK, we need to work more closely with the higher education sector to help develop the professional abilities of those likely to enter the nature conservation jobs market.

4. **Dissemination of scientific knowledge.** Our primary objective is to convert our scientific knowledge and expertise into sound practical advice. Our main audience is amongst land managers and policy makers. We intend to expand the current series of reports, leaflets, handbooks and similar materials, and make much greater use of electronic publication. We will aim to increase our contribution to peer reviewed literature, which, whilst not primarily produced for our main target audiences, provides important quality assurance for our work and helps to build our reputation.

Climate change

The global climate has been getting warmer since the peak of the last Ice Age about 15,000 years ago. This warming has been exacerbated by the emission of greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide, methane and oxides of nitrogen) from human activity over the past 150 years.

English Nature is the leading partner of 10 organisations funding MONARCH (Modelling Natural Resource Responses to Climate Change), a project being carried out by the Oxford University Environmental Change Institute. The project began in July 1999 and will run for 18 months. It uses sophisticated computer-modelling techniques to predict how habitats, species and geomorphological processes may change by 2020 and 2050. The results will be important in formulating nature conservation policy, as it becomes clearer that we cannot assume that the distribution and abundance of wildlife will remain static.

English Nature was one of five organisations who contributed to the report *No place to go? The impact of climate change on wildlife*, which was discussed at a conference in Norwich in September 1999, attended by key climate scientists from around the world. The proceedings of the conference are being distilled into a publication giving guidance for planners and decision-makers, and highlighting the issues that need to be addressed by policy makers in the UK and internationally.

Landscape ecology

Increasingly it is being acknowledged that conservation issues need to be addressed at different scales, and cannot just be dealt with at the individual site level. For example, the conservation of butterflies and moths is often dependent on small details of growth, such as the precise leaf size of single food plant species. On the other hand, climate change is a global phenomenon. At the level of landscape, other factors operate. The patchiness of habitat within the landscape affects the survival of some species by limiting or facilitating movement. Some species, most notably raptors and mammals, require large areas of land or water to find all the food and shelter they need. The flow of water within river and lake catchments influences water quality.

During the year we put considerable effort into developing our work at the landscape scale. Our Living Landscapes Project has focused upon the measures which could be introduced into a number of landscapes in central England to improve their wildlife value. A similar project was carried out, in collaboration with MAFF, looking at restoration of whole floodplains. These projects, together with our three-year project on habitat restoration, have led to a major new initiative 'Lifescapes', which aims to restore the ecological quality of landscapes throughout England, in ways which are socio-economically sustainable, and which reflect local character.

Paul Glendell/English Nature

Typical south Cotswolds landscape, Gloucestershire, one of the counties featured in the Living Landscapes project

Species

Under our own Species Recovery Programme and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan we have funded a wide range of survey, monitoring and ecological studies on individual species. Research into genetics and speciation has developed a new technique for identifying plant DNA. Work on the military orchid has disproved the myth that plants in Suffolk were transplanted from Oxfordshire stock. This work has implications for translocation of species. Behavioural studies of the leaf beetle *Cryptocephalus* has found that the larvae prefer birch leaves on sapling trees but not on coppiced regrowth. This means that management for this species will need to be modified. Invasive species can have major impacts on native plants and animals. Behavioural studies of the male American signal crayfish have revealed how it kills native white-clawed crayfish males in a joust to mate with the native females, even though the mating is infertile. We are now recommending that eradication of American signal crayfish is not practicable, short of eliminating all life in whole river catchments, and that resources are shifted to preventing its introduction into unaffected areas.

Lutra/NHPA

White-clawed crayfish

As this species research proceeds some general scientific issues are emerging. These include the role that genetic diversity plays in species survival; the number, size and distribution of populations required to ensure long-term survival of a species; and a clearer understanding of which habitat and landscape features are critical for survival of groups of species. An example of this is the project to study temporary ponds on heathlands, being carried out by Plymouth University with English Nature funding.

Coastal processes

The natural condition of our coasts is one of constant change caused by storms and other events. Cliffs and other habitats are being eroded, but are matched elsewhere by deposition on shingle beaches, dunes and saltmarshes. We cannot fossilise the coast, and much of coastal wildlife depends on this dynamic state. In our research we aim to develop our understanding of these natural processes, and with MAFF are currently researching land form change in estuaries, where pressures for development and patterns of land use are particularly complex.

Sea level rise is also impacting on the coast, destroying some habitats, and forming new coastal habitat further inland. We are researching the way in which this is influencing coastal species and habitats at a range of study sites in southern and eastern England, where the effects are most marked.

There are many competing demands on the coast and often

these disrupt or modify natural coastal processes. At Dungeness, Europe's largest coastal shingle structure, we are investigating the possible use of marine aggregates to replace current coastal defence works, which are damaging the natural dynamics of the site.

Site monitoring

Monitoring the condition of habitats and species has proved to be a technically complex problem. This is particularly so on SSSIs, where the range of species and habitats is richest. The sites can be very large, covering thousands of hectares. It is not practical for monitoring on such sites to be based upon recording every change in all species and habitats. We have therefore been developing monitoring methods based upon vegetation structure and similar habitat features which can be scientifically validated, and which can be quickly documented. We are also developing means to record species that are easily observed and known to be associated with distinct patterns of change, such as nutrient enrichment. This approach was developed and tested using grassland habitats, and is now being extended to cover all habitats.

Social and economic sciences

There is a long history of using natural science to support nature conservation decisions. Gradually, we have also realised that there are social, economic and institutional issues that we need to understand more clearly. For example, we have researched extensively the ecological impacts of overgrazing in the uplands, but this remains a problem because of issues relating to the farm business, national policy and the institutional framework of the European Union. A significant proportion of our funding for research on agriculture and other economic sectors, such as fisheries and forestry, is therefore spent on a diverse range of socio-economic research, to complement our natural science knowledge.

Socio-economic perceptions play an important part in national and regional government. We have funded research at the University of East Anglia to look at the benefits that society derives from ecosystems, which will help in the development of a framework for assessing the value of biodiversity in economic and social terms. We have also worked with the Countryside Agency to find methods to integrate the idea of 'natural capital' into local and national government planning decisions.

In practice much of this work requires a fusion of understanding about how our natural heritage functions, with broad societal perceptions. This will continue to be an area of novel research for some years.

Modernising English Nature


Michael Boughton/ GIF

The Government's modernising programme was launched in March 1999 with the goal of creating better government to make life better for people.

English Nature has embraced Government's commitments on responsive, quality public services, which deliver forward-looking policies using information age technology. The modernising agenda helps English Nature act as a firm but fair regulator, makes our advice clearer and therefore more influential, enables more action for wildlife by working openly with stakeholders and increases the numbers of people we inspire through the promotion of nature conservation. We are changing the way we work to meet the Government's modernising objectives and have already made progress under most commitments, in particular on being a responsive public service.

Service first

The services and functions of executive Non Departmental Public Bodies are at the heart of government's commitment to achieve better quality and more responsive public services. One way that English Nature demonstrates its commitment to improve its services, and to be more open, is by taking part in *Service First - the new Charter Mark Programme*.

We were awarded the Charter Mark for the second time in 1998, but continued to seek improvement. The award lasts for only three years and, to win it again in 2001, we will need to demonstrate significant improvement against the 10 Charter Mark criteria. These are: to set standards, to be open and provide full information, to consult users, to encourage access and the promotion of choice, to treat all fairly, to put things right when they go wrong, to use resources efficiently, to be innovative and improve services, to work with other providers and to provide user satisfaction.

Bluebell carpet at Thorpe Wood LNR, Cambridgeshire Peter Wakely/English Nature

During 1999/2000 we made progress on a number of fronts.

- We held our first national open meeting and three local open meetings. A telephone poll conducted after the national meeting found that most of those who attended found it useful, but local meetings were better received. All three local events were well attended and the feedback was very positive. Five more are scheduled for 2000/01.

- To give wider access to range of up-to-date information we are continuing to develop our web site. For example it is now possible:

  - to use the web site to find out about vacancies in English Nature and to submit job applications 'on-line'

  - for those who wish to visit National Nature Reserves to find out where they are, what there is to see, access arrangements, and what facilities are available on site

  - to access SSSI maps. SSSI citations will be available later in 2000

  - to read the minutes and agendas of the meetings of English Nature's Council.

- We have overhauled our licensing procedures with the result that forms are now easier to complete, and we can more easily give feedback to applicants on licensing decisions.

For a list of licences issued during the year see our web site.

- We received an increasing number of calls to our Enquiry Service. An important role of the service is to advise people who ask questions on subjects outside our remit who they need to speak to get the information they need. Everyone sent information by the Enquiry Service is given the opportunity to comment on how satisfied they are with the speed and content of the response. The last analysis of customer feedback showed 100% of respondents were satisfied with the speed of reply and 98% were satisfied with the content.

- We continued to keep in regular contact with the owners and occupiers of SSSIs through local newsletters, our magazine *Sitelines* and by meeting them face to face. One important task has been to keep SSSI owners and occupiers briefed on the implications of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill and the Habitats Directive.

- Our complaints procedure allows us to react quickly to individual complaints and to put things right when they go wrong. We also monitor complaints so that we can pick up on trends or issues of wider concern to the organisation, and to change how we operate as a result. Our complaints procedure is available from all English Nature offices and is on our web site. www.english-nature.org.uk

Council Members

At the first meeting of the Council of English Nature in 1990, the Council resolved to establish a Register of Interests of Council Members. This was established in February 1991 and is updated annually. A summary is published below.

Baroness Young of Old Scone (Chairman): Vice-Chairman of BBC. Patron of Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management. Vice-President of Flora and Fauna International. Council Member of Forum for the Future. Life Peer. Vice-President Birdlife International. Non-executive director of Anglian Water plc.

Dr D R Langslow: Chief Executive of English Nature (until 7 February 2000). Chairman of Asian Wetlands Bureau. Chairman of Wetlands International - Asia Pacific and Wetland International - The Americas.

Ms M Appleby: Independent consultant on Rural Policy and Communications. Member of Advisory Board, LEAF. Member of Steering Group, RURAL. Member of Working Group on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, Farmers Link. Vice-Chairman of Norfolk Women's Farming Union.

Mr D T Burke: Environmental consultant. Director of Ambio Ltd. Director of ACT Ltd. Environmental Policy Advisor Rio Tinto plc. Proprietor of Powlet and Company, advising on environmental matters. Visiting Professor Imperial College. Executive Committee member, Green Alliance.

Dr S Gubbay: Independent consultant on marine conservation and coastal management. Member of Marine Conservation Society.

Mrs A Kelaart: Working farmer, Director of Hall Farm South Moreton Ltd.

Miss J Kelly: Independent management consultant. Chairman of West Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust. Lay Member of General Council and Register of Osteopaths 1990-1995. Trustee of Lifecare Charitable Trust. Visiting Fellow of Department of Health Studies, University of York.

Professor G L Lucas: Chairman of Wyldcourt Rainforest Ltd, Vice Chairman and Acting Company Secretary National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens. Adviser to Friends of Kew and Treasurer of Linnean Society. Vice-President of Flora and Fauna International, Surrey Naturalists Trust, BTCV and Royal Geographical Society.

Dr M Moser: Freelance consultant on environment/nature conservation. Board Member of Tour du Valat Foundation, France. Scientific Councillor of the Bonn Convention. Councillor of Honour to Wetlands International.

Professor D Norman: Director of Synchrotron Radiation, Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils, Daresbury Laboratory, and visiting Professor in Surface Science, University of Liverpool. Chairman of Merseyside Ringing Group and Mersey Estuary Conservation Group.

Mr S Tromans: Barrister. Member of Environment Advisory Panel (EAP), National Grid Company. Trustee of Forum for the Future.

Professor R C L Wilson: Professor of Earth Sciences, Open University. Chartered Geologist. Honorary Secretary of Foreign and External Affairs, Geological Society. Consultant to petroleum exploration industry. Member of Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Mr G N Woolley: Managing Director of Woolley & Company. Chairman of Beaver Securities Ltd, Prudential Corporation in-hand farming company. Board Member of Harwich Haven Authority. Member of Environment and Water Committee, and Council of Country Landowners Association. Chairman of Suffolk Branch Country Landowners Association. Director and Trustee for Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust. Council Member of the National Trust.

The complete register is open for public inspection and copies may be obtained from the Head of Private Office, Jonathan Wray. Telephone 01733 455356.

Summary financial statement 1999/2000

Summary foreword

This summary financial statement is only a summary of information in English Nature's financial statements and does not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the results and state of affairs of English Nature. For further information the full annual financial statements and the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on those statements should be consulted. These are published as a House of Commons Paper and can be purchased from the Stationery Office.

This summary financial statement has been prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985 section 251 and the Companies (Summary Financial Statement) Regulations 1995 (SI 1995/2092) and was signed by David Arnold-Forster, the accounting officer, on 28 June 2000.

Review of activities

English Nature's purpose is to promote, directly and through others, the conservation of the wildlife and natural features of England within the wider setting of the United Kingdom and its international responsibilities.

In pursuit of this purpose, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 conferred upon English Nature the following functions:

I. to establish and maintain and manage nature reserves (within the meaning of Section 15 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949);

ii. to advise Ministers on policies for or affecting nature conservation;

iii. to provide advice and disseminate knowledge about nature conservation;

iv. to commission and support or, if necessary, carry out relevant research;

v. various duties, under other statutory provisions, notably:

(a) to notify Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and to take such steps as are open to it to protect them - for example, by advice and/or by agreements under Section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968;

(b) to issue or advise Ministers on the issue of licences affecting protected species, for example, under Section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;

(c) to take account as appropriate in the discharge of its functions of actual or possible ecological changes.

English Nature shall (under Section 133(3) of the Act), in discharging its functions have regard to any advice given to them by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

The following are examples of some of English Nature's achievements in 1999/00. A more comprehensive report of progress during this period is set out elsewhere in this annual report.

During 1999/00 English Nature undertook a series of public meetings to explain what it is and how it works, as part of its commitment to the Government's 'Opening up Quangos' initiative. English Nature has also been developing its web-site to include information on job vacancies, Natural Areas, National Nature Reserves and the minutes of Council meetings.

Consultations have been completed on 90% of terrestrial Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The remaining 10% will be completed by March 2001. As a result of the EU Moderation process the entire Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) site series has been reviewed and many site proposals made to government. The SAC designation programme has completely changed as a result of Moderation, but it is proposed to designate 95% of terrestrial SACs by December 2000.

English Nature co-ordinated the editing, consultation and agreements of 219 Species Action Plans, 94 Species Statements and 21 Habitat Action Plans as part of the successful publication of Volumes III to VI of Tranche 2 Action Plans on behalf of the UK Biodiversity Group. Sets of biodiversity indicators of sustainable development were identified for eight Government Regions and London. Targets for the Species Recovery Programme were exceeded, including 80 new projects added in 1999/00 and delivery of Species Action Plan targets for five species.

Advice and support to government was provided on a wide range of policy development issues including planning, regional and local government, access, sustainable development, energy, CAP reform, flood and coastal defence, freedom of information. Evidence is regularly submitted to Parliamentary Select Committees.

Good contact has been maintained with over 32,000 owners and occupiers on 4,088 SSSIs,

covering 1,053,796 ha. At the end of March 2000, the percentage of SSSI units with 'agreed management' recorded as appropriate was 66% against a target of 60% and the percentage of SSSI units with the condition 'favourable' or 'improving' was 70% against a target of 60%. The additional Grant-in-Aid enabled most management agreement targets to be exceeded.

The annual report of National Nature Reserves covering 1998/99 shows that over 95% are making satisfactory progress towards management objectives. Recovery projects are being implemented to address the problems on NNRs that are not making satisfactory progress towards management objectives. Over 200 demonstration events were held on NNRs in 1998/99 and with an estimated 8.9 million visitors.

A total of 188 projects for management works and machinery or equipment purchase were funded under the Reserves Enhancement Scheme, helping to contribute to achieving Biodiversity Action Plan, Natura 2000 and other SSSI targets.

Regulation 33 packages for 10 candidate SACs (and associated SPAs) were produced. The whole Regulation 33 programme is ahead of schedule with final packages due to be signed off by English Nature's Council in February 2001. The production of these packages reflects a thorough consultative exercise involving local communities.

The Local Nature Reserves Grant Scheme was launched in May 1999 and has been very successful in its first year. A Biodiversity Grants Scheme was launched in February 2000 and there has already been considerable interest.

Future developments

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions announced that English Nature's grant in aid for 2000/01 is to be £49,637,000.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the EU Birds and Habitats Directive remain English Nature's key priorities and are the major source of its national nature conservation targets. Detailed measures and targets are set out in English Nature's Work Plan 1999-2002.

The new SSSI legislation and access implications of the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill will place additional demands on English Nature, which will need to be adequately resourced. English Nature will continue to work with the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and others to provide advice as the new legislation is enacted and to ensure successful implementation. There is a very significant task in addressing the 30% of SSSIs in unfavourable condition and implementing more BAP targets.

There will be significant demands from the new candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) to be put forward to Brussels in 2000. The recently amended Habitats Regulation will require assessment and action on certain damaging activities on candidate SACs before confirmation by the EC.

English Nature intends to embark on a 'Lifescapes' programme restoring and recreating habitats and linking special sites with buffer areas and corridors, giving England's wildlife resilience, bringing it closer to people and helping species to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Work with government to implement 'A better quality of life - a strategy for sustainable development for the UK', including using tools such as the regional biodiversity indicators, environmental accounts and appraisal systems.

We were awarded the Chartermark for the second time in 1998. This award lasts for only three years and to win again in 2001, we will need to demonstrate continuous improvement. We are committed to this and to responding to the broader Modernising Government agenda.

In support of this we will implement any necessary actions including:

- development of our website to make information more accessible and provide interactive facilities;
- increased consultation to enhance our understanding of attitudes towards nature conservation and our services amongst key stakeholders and the public;
- more open meetings designed to meet the needs of the different range of stakeholders and the public;
- working to develop an Information Asset Register.

We will also implement a major upgrade of our IT support systems which will help us to achieve the above.

Members of the Council are listed on page 39.

Summary Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2000

	1999/2000 £'000	1998/99 £'000
Income		
Grant in aid received	40,579	35,356
Shared conservation income	2,595	2,535
Other government grants	545	645
Income from activities	1,127	1,274
Transfers from reserves and provisions	2,078	2,212
Other operating income	159	230
	47,083	42,252
Expenditure		
Maintenance of National Nature Reserves (NNRs)	2,309	2,089
Management agreements	8,896	7,335
Conservation support	6,044	3,866
Information and publicity	1,038	902
Grants	2,132	1,872
Staff costs	16,842	16,645
Other operating costs	6,898	6,007
Depreciation	1,299	1,340
Shared conservation expenditure	2,588	2,547
Amounts written off fixed assets	125	318
Notional superannuation	865	971
	49,036	43,892
(Deficit) on operating activities before superannuation	**(1,953)**	**(1,640)**
Superannuation receipts	454	516
(Deficit) on operating activities	**(1,499)**	**(1,124)**
Profit on sale of fixed assets	(72)	7
Interest receivable	167	190
Notional cost of capital	(461)	(462)
(Deficit) on ordinary activities	**(1,865)**	**(1,389)**
Add back notional costs	1,346	1,454
Transfer from revaluation reserve	18	31
Retained (deficit)/surplus for the financial year	**(501)**	**96**
Council Members' emoluments	131	112

Summary Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2000

	1999/2000 £'000	1998/99 £'000
Fixed assets	6,665	6,499
Current assets	2,892	2,715
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(1,354)	(1,361)
Net current assets	1,538	1,354
Total assets less current liabilities	8,203	7,853
Provisions for liabilities and charges	1,598	1,529
Accruals and deferred income	4,907	4,054
Capital and reserves	1,698	2,270
	8,203	7,853

The certificate and report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the full financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2000 was unqualified and did not contain a statement made under either section 237(2) of the Companies Act 1985 (accounting records or returns inadequate or accounts not agreeing with records or returns) or section 237(3) (failure to obtain necessary information and explanations).

David Arnold-Forster
28 June 2000
Accounting Officer

Statement of the Comptroller and Auditor General to the Houses of Parliament

I have examined the summary financial statements on pages 40 to 42 which have been prepared in the form and on the basis set out in the summary foreword on page 40.

Respective responsibilities of the Council, the Chief Executive and auditors

The summary financial statement is the responsibility of the Council and Chief Executive. My responsibility is to report to you my opinion on its preparation and consistency with the full financial statements and foreword.

Basis of opinion

I have conducted my work in accordance with the Auditing Guideline The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement adopted by the Auditing Practices Board.

Opinion

In my opinion the summary financial statement is consistent with the full financial statements and foreword of the Nature Conservancy Council for England for the year ended 31 March 2000 and has been properly prepared on the basis set out in the summary foreword to the summary financial statement.

John Bourn
Comptroller and Auditor General

National Audit Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London SW1W 9SP

Glossary

Agri-environment schemes. These include Countryside Stewardship, Environmentally Sensitive Areas and the Organic Aid scheme. Co-funded by the UK Government and the EU, they aim to maintain and enhance the landscape, built heritage, wildlife and public access.

Biodiversity This is the variety of living things, including the habitats that support them and the genetic variation within species.

Charter Mark this is awarded by the Government in recognition of service to the public and customers.

England Forestry Strategy. This describes how the Government will deliver its forestry policies in England and sets out priorities and programmes for forestry for the next five to ten years.

Habitat Action Plans are written for habitats including fens, chalk grassland and oak woodland that are suffering sharp decline, are important for rare species, or are internationally important.

Habitats Regulation. The legal instrument that translates the obligations of the European Directives into UK law. A recent amendment extends the legal protection of sites so that candidate SACs are now protected as if they were confirmed SACs.

Less Favoured Areas (LFAs). LFA is a designation given to certain upland areas in England where agriculture is marginal and special subsidies are available to support farming. The LFA accounts for nearly 15% of the total area of England and is of immense natural and heritage value.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPS) English Nature relies on people's local knowledge and skills to deliver national biodiversity targets on the ground.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). In England LNRs are declared by local authorities in consultation with English Nature. For land to be declared an LNR it must be of special value locally.

National Nature Reserves. English Nature manages a network of National Nature Reserves. NNRs are places where people can experience and enjoy the best examples of England's wildlife. They protect and are managed to conserve their wildlife and geological interest.

Natura 2000. The network of SPAs and SACs across the European Union.

Natural Areas. We have defined a series of 120 Natural Areas, covering the whole of England. These biogeographic zones reflect the geology, wildlife, land use and cultural aspects of the area, and provide an ecological framework in which to target our work more effectively.

Nature Conservation Orders (NCOs) and Special Nature Conservation Orders (SNCOs). These orders are made by the Secretary of State for the DETR in order to conserve the nature conservation interests of any land within, respectively, a national or European designated site.

Reserves Enhancement Scheme. This aims to improve the management of SSSIs that are managed by voluntary conservation organisations as nature reserves, to seek further involvement of volunteers, to make them more accessible to the public, and to increase public understanding and appreciation of the natural heritage.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The **Habitats Directive** requires European member states to maintain or restore habitats and species at a favourable conservation status in the community. This involves the designation of SACs.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The Birds Directive (1979) requires European member states to designate SPAs to conserve the habitats of certain particularly rare species and of migratory species. English Nature consults with owners, occupiers and local authorities on the proposed classifications.

Species Action Plans are written for priority species that are threatened globally or are declining rapidly in the UK, including the water vole, large blue butterfly and juniper.

Species Recovery Programme. English Nature's Species Recovery Programme runs projects to increase the populations of species that are scarce, vulnerable and threatened. English Nature is working with partners on over 200 species including the red kite, ladybird spider and depressed river mussel.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The best wildlife sites are designated as SSSIs. They represent the best examples of the natural variation in wildlife habitats and geological features in England and they protect the range of this variation.

Sustainable development. Sustainable development is that which allows society's social and economic needs to be met without damaging the quality of the natural environment.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan. This is a commitment made by government to increase the variety of native wildlife - the biodiversity - within the UK.

Wildlife corridors. These are areas of habitat such as hedgerow and grassland that link up wildlife sites and reduce their isolation, allowing plants and animals to move between.

Wildlife Enhancement. A voluntary scheme run by English Nature, designed to develop an effective partnership with managers of SSSIs to improve their wildlife interest. The scheme offers annual payments for managing land for wildlife, and fixed costs payments to pay for capital work.

Woodland Grant Scheme. This scheme, administered by the Forestry Commission, pays grants for managing and improving woodlands, and for excluding stock from certain woods. It is available for woodlands and forests which are at least 0.25 ha, 15m wide and have 20% canopy cover.

Local Teams

15 June 2000

For general enquiries about local issues, contact the appropriate team listed below. National Office contacts are listed opposite.

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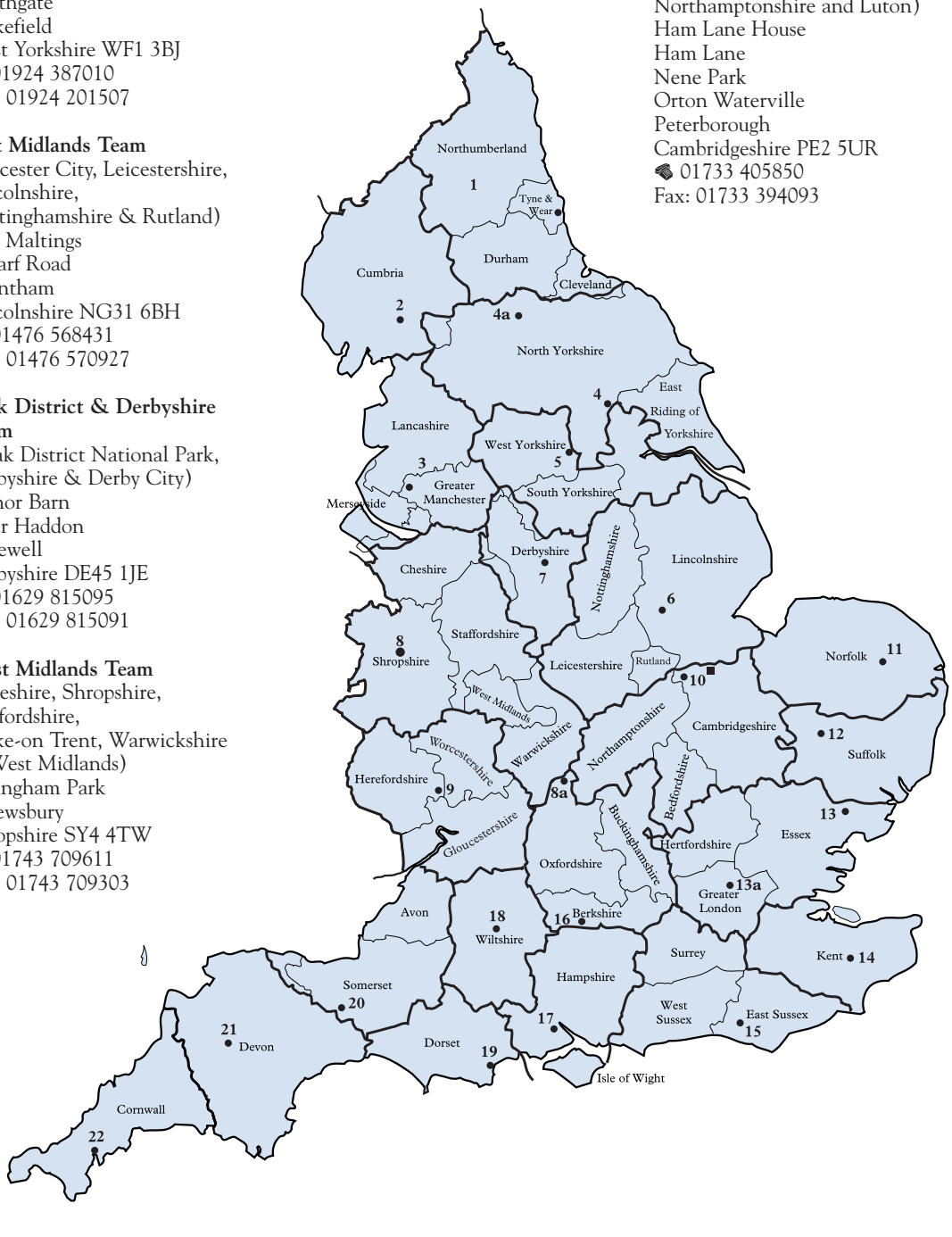

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15 June 2000

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