



Waking up to wildlife

It's all happening on Nature Reserves

Green heroes

Why volunteering is good for your health

Nursery story

On the trail of baby bats

Summer fun

Where to go for some great days out



Natural England

Major changes are currently taking place within Government about the way the future of England's landscapes and nature are managed, protected, funded and enjoyed in the future.

A new independent body – Natural England – to be created in October 2006, is bringing together the current roles of English Nature, the Landscape, Access and Recreation division of the Countryside Agency and the environment activities of the Rural Development Service.



Cover picture by Paul Glendell



"Wild Day Out" activities at Lathkill Dale NNR in the Derbyshire Dales. (LNR celebrations p4-7, Year of the Volunteer p10-11)

Although English Nature magazine does not have a regular letters page, I am always interested in receiving feedback about the magazine, or letters on subjects that may be of interest to our readers. If there is a subject that you feel would be relevant to our readership, please write to me or email me, and I will certainly consider publishing your letter in the magazine.

Contact me, Amanda Giles, at English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA, or at amanda.giles@english-nature.org.uk

If you would like to add or remove your name from our mailing list for this magazine, please contact Alison Eley, IMT, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA or email: alison.eley@english-nature.org.uk.

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How Scarlet has gone with the wind

One of the North East's famous red kites has developed wanderlust and embarked on an epic adventure covering over 1,000 kilometres.

The bird, named Scarlet by schoolchildren in Blaydon, is one of 20 youngsters released in Gateshead's Derwent Valley, last July, as part of the Northern Kites project. The initiative aims to restore red kites as a breeding species to the area after an absence of more than 150 years.



Neil Wasp/Northern Kites

Despite being less than a year old, she has made a 1,000 kilometre round trip to revisit her birthplace in the Chilterns, as well as fitting in a flying visit to Wales and a short-haul flight to North Yorkshire. The Northern Kites project partners think that Scarlet, like her literary namesake, may be out to find romance.

Project manager, Keith Bowey, said, "Records show that a small number of kites will fly long distances but it's amazing that Scarlet has covered over 1,000 kilometres in such a short period of time.

"As she is one of just five females in the group, we do hope that, having checked out all these different places, she will choose to make her home in the north-east."

The birds carry tiny radio transmitters and coloured wing tags, so Keith and the other kite officers across the UK can track them.

□ Northern Kites is a joint initiative between English Nature, the RSPB, Gateshead Council, Northumbrian Water, the National Trust and the Forestry Commission, with additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and SITA Environment Trust.

Greenspace issues on the menu

Nine out of ten urban residents in the North East value greenspace as important to their lives, according to a survey commissioned by the Countryside Agency.

The values they associated with local open spaces were tranquillity, relaxation, stress relief, fresh air, natural surroundings, wildlife, feeling free, and lack of traffic. Dirt and rubbish were seen as the main barrier to using open areas.

The findings were revealed at a Communities and Greenspace Breakfast Meeting in Newcastle, organised jointly by the Natural England partners: the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the Rural Development Service. It brought together 50 decision-makers from across the North-East region to debate the importance of greenspace and whether we need to provide more.

Gardeners' World glory

For the second year running, English Nature scooped the award for Best Contribution to Environmental and Conservation Issues at the Gardeners' World Live 2005 show.

Gardeners' World presenter, Monty Don, handed over the award to English Nature's People and Nature Development Manager, Dave Stone, at the show in Birmingham in June.

The theme of the winning stand was: *Wanted: Space for Wildlife*. It featured a block of flats, a pond and bog garden complete with wildlife, a living roof, made of gravel, and a sensory garden, showing visitors that wildlife can thrive anywhere, not just in the countryside.

Another major attraction was a living willow den where children could enjoy arts and

crafts. Visitors were keen to find out about natural gardening methods without chemicals or peat.

Jan Lippiatt, English Nature's Events Manager, said, "It's been great to meet so many people who want to encourage wildlife into their gardens. We are delighted to have won this award, which reinforces all the positive comments we have received from visitors to our stand."



Paul Glendell/English Nature

English Nature Stand at Gardeners' World Live 2005

Summer search for rare beetle

The race is on to spot one of our most endangered beetles, the noble chafer.

The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) is seeking volunteers to watch out for the beetles, which can be recognised by their stunning green colour. They are usually seen in old orchards during July and August and will feed on nectar from open-structured flowers, like hogweed, on sunny days.



Matt Smith

Look out for the noble chafer

The PTES is lead partner for the noble chafer's Biodiversity Action Plan and needs to monitor exactly where it is seen so that conservation efforts can be targeted appropriately. Most recent recordings have come from Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, although historically it was found in Cumbria, Kent, Devon, Essex, Hampshire and Oxfordshire.

Anyone who thinks they may have seen the noble chafer is asked to let the PTES know and, if possible, send a digital photograph to enquiries@ptes.org

To receive a colour postcard to help identify the beetle, send a stamped addressed envelope to PTES, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG.

Editorial

Summer's here. It's hot and sunny, and everyone wants to get out of town. As far as I'm concerned, nothing beats the English seaside or countryside on a beautiful summer's day. With climate change meaning we really can feel the heat here, why suffer in airports and swelter abroad, when we have so much to celebrate at home.

In this bumper summer issue of English Nature magazine, we're joining in with the celebrations on national and local nature reserves across the country. Hundreds of people have been waking up to wildlife at events ranging from bat watching to teddy bears' picnics. Read about these on pages 4 to 7. Celebrities have been getting involved too – Nick Baker shares his really wild ideas with us on page 8, while Bill Oddie calls for Breathing Space on page 9

But it's not just the great and the glorious who offer us inspiration. 2005 is Year of the Volunteer, and on pages 10 to 13 we hear some rousing stories from people who have given up time and energy to work with nature. Businessman Malcolm Johnston tells us how his idea of a good break is to shepherd Swaledales, while graduate Sam Goodwin explains how building dry-stone walls helped her career.

We're going batty at Moccas Park in Herefordshire on pages 14 and 15, protecting baby bats from the tree surgeon's axe. And we have a few Great Days Out to recommend on pages 16 and 17, with a trip to Paradise Preserved on page 20.

Amanda Giles



FACTFILE:

Local Nature Reserves

- are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, by local authorities, Parish and Town Councils;
- are normally bigger than 2ha;
- have high natural interest in the area for either wildlife or geology;
- can be enjoyed by the local community;
- can usually be used for education or research.

To find out more about LNRs in your area visit English Nature's website www.english-nature.org.uk, or contact your local council.

Hundreds of people have been Waking up to Wildlife at their Local Nature Reserves this July as part of a two-week nationwide celebration.

Waking up to Wildlife



Volunteers clear vegetation from a pond in Myrna Close LNR, London

It is now well-known that getting close to nature improves our health and well-being, and LNRs give more and more people the chance to enjoy the benefits of greenspace right on their own doorsteps.

LNRs are areas set aside for both people and wildlife, with natural features that have special interest locally. They range from ancient woodlands, flower covered meadows and coastal headlands, to former railway corridors, abandoned landfill sites and industrial areas.

The celebrations, from Saturday, 16 July, to Sunday, 31 July, have been organised to encourage more people to explore these national treasures, especially those who have never visited a nature reserve before.

English Nature's People and Nature Communications Officer, Hazel Hynds, said, "This is a fantastic opportunity to explore

local nature reserves and find out what makes them so special. People have been trying all sorts of activities, from pond dipping and bat watching to teddy bears' picnics and tai chi, while enjoying beautiful surroundings and getting close to some amazing wildlife. Wherever you are and whatever you enjoy doing, Local Nature Reserves have something to offer you."

The activities were kick-started by a star-studded launch day at Sheffield's Shire Brook Valley LNR, with BBC TV presenter Nick Baker, of The Really Wild Show and fitness guru Mr Motivator. A Wild Workout with Mr Motivator prepared visitors for a healthy walk round the reserve's woodlands, meadows, heaths and marshlands, while Nick invited people to join him for a close-up view of the creatures on the site.

A drama workshop at Bedfont Lakes Country Park LNR, in Middlesex, was given a

biodiversity theme to spark the audience's interest in local species and habitats.

There was a rare chance to learn about the unique geology of the Buckingham Sandpit reserve, which has rocks from the Cretaceous to the Tertiary period about 65 million years ago, spanning the time when dinosaurs became extinct. This reserve is not usually open to the public because of the dangers associated with a former quarry site. But an open day allowed people to enjoy the special features by joining guided tours with an expert geologist or botanist.

Walkers were invited to capture the natural environment of the London Borough of Havering on film, during a Wildlife and Art Park Walk, taking in The Manor, a newly-designated LNR. The event has been organised in partnership with the local Walking the Way to Health group to encourage people to exercise in their local greenspace.

A Canal Wildlife Fun day marked the designation of the Grand Western Canal Country Park, in Devon, promoting the health benefits of walking, cycling, rowing and canoeing in the LNR. Buggies were provided by the local Shopmobility Association to make the event accessible for disabled people.

The total number of Local Nature Reserves in England now stands at 1,160, covering more than 30,000 hectares, with over half of them declared in the last decade. English Nature's long-term goal is to have at least one hectare of LNR for every 1,000 people.



Young visitors Owen, Charlotte and Scott exploring the new grassland interpretation board at Quarry Moor

Facelift for quarry park

An extensive refurbishment project has transformed Quarry Moor LNR, opening it up to a wider range of local people and offering new ways of learning about the important features of the reserve.

Quarry Moor, a tranquil spot on the outskirts of Ripon, North Yorkshire, was donated by a local dignitary, Alderman Thomas F Spence in 1945 and held in trust for the benefit of the community.

It is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its rare magnesian limestone grassland and exposed quarry face. It is the only place in the UK where you can see the special deposits in limestone rocks from the Permian Period 255 million years ago, when the area was on the shoreline of the Zechstein Sea.

The trustees who manage the site have recently improved it, with a £71,500 grant from English Nature's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (ALSF), which exists to reduce the impact of aggregate extraction on nearby communities and the environment. The rest of the funding came from the Ripon City Partnership, which unites local organisations to regenerate the city. A launch day was organised as part of the LNR celebrations.

Project manager, Barry Slaymaker, said, "There is already a great deal of affection for this special place among the community and the improvements will raise its profile and make it more attractive to different kinds of visitors. It is an excellent teaching resource for local and regional schools with its special geological features and important wildlife and flowers like bee orchids and autumn gentian which thrive on the site."

The activities centre has been completely refurbished with improved access for disabled visitors. New interpretation boards have been set up, along with information leaflets describing the site and its geology. There is an education pack and a new website with downloadable work sheets.

Visitor Nicki Robinson, aged 13, said, "I've known Quarry Moor all my life and it is a really special place. I love watching dragonflies hunting over the meadow. There's so much wildlife here and these improvements will make it even better."

Find out more on www.quarrymoor.org.uk

Creating community spirit

In one of the most deprived areas of the UK, Local Nature Reserves are helping to build community spirit and bring people closer to nature.



John's Studio

She reached out to the community by organising lots of fun events for all the family such as animal parades and hedgehog roadshows, pram walks and toddler walks and arts and crafts or textile workshops for older people.

Sue explained, "Many people didn't even know the greenspaces were there and others didn't feel confident to use them. But once they were recognised officially as Local Nature Reserves, instead of 'green ghettos', things started to change. They attracted a lot of people who had never been to any kind of nature reserve before."

The wild spaces now provide a base for a wider community project, which sees Sue taking the message out to schools, and children's groups. Environmental activities and outings have fostered a sense of pride and citizenship among pupils.

In the area around Berwick Hills LNR, less than 50 per cent of households have access to a car, so the nearby greenspace is vital to their quality of life.

Helene Hindus, a teacher at the Berwick Hills Primary School, says, "We think that staff and pupils have been able to develop an appreciation and respect for the environment beyond the school grounds. The children have gained first-hand experience of how to improve their wider community and OFSTED inspectors were impressed with the opportunities for community links that the children were afforded through the Wildspace! Project."



John's Studio

Richard Buckley talks to young visitors about wildlife at a Wildspace! ladybird roadshow at Berwick Hills LNR

Wild side of the city

Wild open space is at a premium in the London Borough of Camden, where leafy suburbs like Hampstead and Primrose Hill sit alongside deprived areas like Somerstown and Kings Cross.

Local people involved in managing these spaces believe that designating more sites as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) will raise their profile and ensure they are enjoyed by a wide cross-section of the community.

When the Camden Wildspace! project started in 2004 there was just one nature reserve in Camden – Camley Street LNR, near Kings Cross. The project, lead by the London Borough of Camden, supported by English Nature and backed with £63,000 of Big Lottery Fund money, chose three sites which would potentially make ideal reserves for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

The sites were: Belsize Wood, an enclosed area of woodland alongside the famous 1930s Isokon flats; Adelaide Wood, a railway cutting on the main Euston to Birmingham line; and Jenny Wood, another cutting on the St Pancras main line. A Community Liaison Officer, Dave Lawrence, started work on developing links with the local communities.

Initially, the project focused on Belsize Wood, a locked site, prone to anti-social behaviour, which was declared an LNR in October 2004. English Nature's Wildspace! Grants Officer, Trudie Mills, said, "This site has undergone a miraculous



Dave Lawrence

Volunteers work on Belsize Wood, Camden

transformation from an inaccessible, mysterious and hostile place to a flourishing Local Nature Reserve with a much improved appearance and greater feeling of safety that the whole community can now enjoy."

Paths have been improved, local children have planted trees, bird and plant surveys are conducted, and litter problems are now under control. The site is open every Wednesday as well as the third Sunday of each month. Activities at Belsize Wood include nature trails, evening bat walks, minibeast hunting for children and seasonal gatherings such as Halloween events with apple bobbing, costume making and games.

A friends group has been formed and meets regularly to discuss ways to enhance the site. It is currently working with the Community Liaison Officer to seek funding to improve access for disabled people. Children from nearby estates love visiting the site and schools have used it for national curriculum activities.

The project, now in its second year, is concentrating work on Jenny Wood, which has officially been proposed for designation, and already has a support group set up.

Adelaide Wood has also been proposed and will be the focus of the third and final year of the project in 2006. The team is confident all three sites will be declared LNRs by the end of August 2006 with four Camden communities benefiting from LNRs on their doorsteps.



Now is the time for...

by Nick Baker

TV nature presenter, Nick Baker, was a star guest at the LNR celebration launch. Here Nick shares some wild ideas for summer.

Adam White



Nick hunts for creatures on the beach

Half pint cuttlefish

"Not a baby common cuttlefish but a minute species in its own right, these mobile little molluscs can often be found in rock pools this time of the year, especially if you go looking at night with a torch. They are about as close to being 'cute' as a mollusc can get, all rounded with big eyes. But do not be fooled. They are as ferocious a predator as their bigger cousins, feeding on shrimp and prawns."

Peter Wakeley/English Nature



Cornish sucker fish

A visit to the other world

"Just a few feet from the ends of your toes, when you are lying out prostrate on the sand on a summer bank holiday, is a wild world of weirdies. I always find something I have never seen before if I'm hunting around in the rock pools. On the west coast, look out for the fancy little fish the Cornish sucker or cling fish. Not only is it brightly coloured, with blue eye spots and a pinkish tinge to its body, it also has a remarkable adaptation to its intertidal haunts in the form of a sucker formed from the fused pectoral fins on its underside. It can be so powerful at holding on, that getting them out of a bucket or even off your hand can be quite a job."

Geoff Simpson/English Nature



Sand lizard

Reptiles

"I guess we traditionally think of the summer as being sunny and lovely and, being a romantic, that is what I shall continue to assume. It's not just us humans that enjoy a little basking. Get up early on one of those days that promise azure skies and while the air temperature is still cool, go walking. We have six species of reptiles and the southern heathlands are about the only place you stand a chance of seeing the

Peter Wakeley/English Nature



Grass snake

rarest of the bunch, sand lizards and smooth snakes, but many of the others can be turned up pretty much anywhere there is cover close to a nice little sun trap or basking spot. What's extra special is that, about now, you may also stumble upon newly hatched or born lizards and snakes."

Gauzy wings

"It is the quintessential summer time experience. Sitting back by the edge of a pond and watching dragonflies and damselflies in action. A good rich pond will be buzzing with as much drama and sex as the best Hollywood blockbuster right now! You should see territorial dog fights between males, feeding flights, egg laying and, if you are really fortunate, you may not be the only one watching these hyper-active insects. So will the Hobby. These fast and highly mobile birds specialize in hunting these insects, snatching them out of the air and dismembering them in mid-flight."

Paul Glendell/English Nature



Pair of ruddy darter dragonflies

TV call for Breathing Space

The BBC's Springwatch Survey, hailed as the biggest public participation exercise of its kind in the world, has confirmed that spring is coming earlier in the UK, and provides further evidence of the relatively rapid changes facing our habitats and wildlife.

In response to a call by Bill Oddie on his successful *Springwatch* programme, viewers recorded over 150,000 first sightings of key species like frogspawn, bumblebees or the return of swifts from Africa.

Jim Burt, English Nature's Head of External Relations, said, "Mass participation programmes, such as the Springwatch Survey, make an important contribution to science by collecting information in more detail than would otherwise be practical."

More than three million people tuned into the show each night to

see spring unfolding across the country, and the ways in which British wildlife is struggling to reproduce and survive the changing climate.

The programme was also the launching pad for the *Breathing Space* campaign, a partnership between the BBC and some of the UK's leading conservation organisations, which has seen nearly 200,000 people prepared to commit time, energy and space to helping wildlife. Already, people have promised 25 million hours of help to British wildlife through the creation of bird boxes, bumblebee boxes, wildflower meadows and compost heaps.

Everyone who gets involved receives a *Breathing Space* action pack, including English Nature's *Gardening with Wildlife in Mind* CD, with tips on how you can help.

Richard Taylor-Jones/BBC



Springwatch's Bill Oddie

Andy Clements, Director of Protected Areas, said, "Our wildlife needs room to breathe – to move around, to breed, to find food and water. In the face of climate change, relatively isolated reserves and protected areas within the wider landscape are no longer enough. We need to join up the gaps and create more breathing space for our wildlife."

For more information visit bbc.co.uk/breathingspaces

Nurturing natural values



A river flowing through a southeast London park has been freed from its straitjacket, creating a natural flood plain to reduce the risk of flooding to homes and businesses downstream.

The concrete channel that constrained the River Quaggy, in Sutcliffe Park, has been removed, recreating the river's sweeps and turns, and more natural landforms. The river was once hidden and regarded as an eyesore, but now

it is an integral feature of the park. It is viewed as a public asset and its newly re-instated meanders and shallows provide valuable wildlife habitats.

This is one of a range of projects that illustrates an ecological approach to our greenspaces. A new document which draws on such case studies, *London's Natural Values*, is to be published shortly by English Nature and the London Wildlife Trust.

It advocates treating the network of the capital's parks and open spaces as a holistic 'green infrastructure'. It shows how considering the diverse values of greenspace can benefit urban living in the wider sense, by helping to tackle flood management, the effects of extreme summer heat, sustainable resource use, pollution

Quaggy Waterways Action Group



River Quaggy after its restoration and opposite, as it was before.

control, coping with climate change and biodiversity conservation.

The publication will explain how approaching the design and management of these greenspaces in a more integrated and connected way could help mitigate a range of environmental problems.

To obtain a copy, email: london@english-nature.org.uk

Green heroes rally round



Matthew Beesley/BTCV

As part of the Year of the Volunteer, May 2005 was designated Environment Month, with hundreds of people joining in events aimed at *Making Space for Wildlife and People*.

Making stock fencing at Aston Rowant NNR

Two million people give their time each year to support 'green' projects and research shows that they are likely to lose weight and become less stressed while they are helping to improve the environment.

During Environment month, there were hundreds of volunteering activities across the country, including taster sessions of BTCV Green Gyms – outdoor workouts organised by the BTCV, the practical conservation charity – on National Nature Reserves and a mass volunteering day to save the bluebell from invasive weeds in the Royal Botanic gardens in Kew, Surrey.

English Nature's Volunteer Programme Manager, Anne-Marie Fraser, said, "Practical conservation volunteering is a great way to enjoy the countryside and be healthy and happy. It gets you out in the fresh air, in a beautiful place, and meeting new people.

"In turn, English Nature benefits from the huge range of skills offered by our volunteers and we are able to increase the amount of time spent on protecting nature. We have estimated that our volunteers give a total of 7,500 days of support every year."

FACTFILE:

The Year of the Volunteer is led by a partnership between Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and the Volunteering England Consortium and supported by the Home Office.

Environment Month activities were led by BTCV working with CSV Environment; English Nature; Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; RSPB; The National Trust; The Tree Council; and The Wildlife Trusts.



Matthew Beesley/BTCV

Scrub clearance at Aston Rowant NNR

Shining examples

English Nature staff were among 230 guests at a celebration evening at Kew Gardens on Friday, May 13, to recognise the 'Green Stars', the thousands of environmental volunteers across the UK. The event was attended by a broad cross-section of organisations which support the Year of the Volunteer.

To find out more about volunteering opportunities visit www.yearofthevolunteer.org For volunteering with English Nature contact Anne-Marie Fraser on 01924 334500, email anne-marie.fraser@english-nature.org.uk or visit www.english-nature.org.uk/about/volunteers/

Harry Fiolet/FIPA



Fencing task

At English Nature's Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve, in Oxfordshire, volunteers and members of three local Green Gyms got together to make a sheep corral for the reserve's flock of speckled-faced Beulah sheep.

Under the guidance of reserve staff, the group from the Sonning Common, Aylesbury and Abingdon Green Gyms put up post and rail fencing and a hand-gate, to make a pen for the Welsh sheep used to manage the nationally-important chalk grassland. They carried out scrub clearance on the site, which supports many rare plants like the Chiltern gentian (*Gentianella germanica*) and 11 different orchid species.

Elsewhere on the reserve, women from High Wycombe's ESOL group – English for Speakers of Other Languages – showed off their artistic talents, combining language with artwork, such as drawing, painting and leaf prints, to illustrate the natural features around them. The group, from different ethnic backgrounds, such as Asian, Chinese, Cuban and Polish, get together to improve their language skills as well as making new friends.

Communing with nature – an ESOL member



Jill Pakenham

Both groups met up for a picnic lunch and enjoyed watching red kites flying overhead.

English Nature's Assistant Site Manager, Mick Venters, said, "It was a fabulous day out. Some of the group said their experience of the countryside had previously been restricted to visiting a park in the town. But they promised they would be back soon for a big family picnic on the reserve."

Pulling power

Breeding nightjars benefited on the Humberhead Peatlands NNR near Doncaster, where 106 volunteers, plus staff from English Nature and the BTCV, pulled out Scots pine saplings to open up the lowland raised peatbog and improve the habitat for birds.

The event was a showcase for the BTCV Green Gyms based in Doncaster, Sheffield and Wakefield and kicked off with a Green Gym warm-up before the work began.

BTCV project assistant Siobhan Hamilton, who was previously a volunteer, said, "It was a brilliant day. The volunteers came from all over Yorkshire and it was an excellent opportunity for them to meet each other. As well as the reward of helping to improve the environment, there was also a very strong feeling of unity as people worked together."

Nightjars benefited from the habitat improvements

After leaving university, geography graduate Sam Goodwin struggled to find an opening in her chosen career in conservation and found herself working in the hotel industry.



The volunteers celebrate as the walling is completed

Building on experience

volunteer with the BTCV and completed its formal Institute for Environmental Conservation training.

Now she has landed a full-time job as a Community Project Officer, teaching other volunteers to do conservation work and, at an Environment Month event at Lathkill Dale, Sam showed about 40 volunteers dry-stone walling skills for a taster session amid the White Peak landscape.

She said, "From a personal point of view, conservation volunteering helped me to get my career off the ground, but since I have been in the post I have been able to see the benefits for others. It keeps them physically active and healthy, while they meet like-minded people and build self-confidence. Working outdoors can really lift your spirits."

Those who attended the event rebuilt derelict walls around an area of grassland being restored as hay meadow.



Dry-stone walling on Lathkill Dale NNR

So, Sam signed up as a part-time English Nature volunteer on the Lathkill Dale NNR in the Derbyshire Dales.

Working alongside reserve staff she gained various conservation skills on site, like dry-stone walling. She progressed to become a full-time

Book review

Britain's Orchids by David Lang
Published by WILDGuides
£15.00 inc p&p
(ISBN 1-903657-06-7)
Tel: 0870 1214 177
www.wildguides.co.uk

A new comprehensive illustrated field guide to Britain's Orchids has been launched this summer.

The book, published by WILDGuides and backed



by English Nature, covers all 51 types of orchids in the UK and Ireland and is a must for enthusiasts.

Readers can learn about the new Lindisfarne Helleborine orchid, found only on English Nature's Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve, in Northumbria, and many endangered species which appear in the Vascular Plant Red Data list.

The easy-to-follow format will help both beginners and experts to identify any species they come across. The book gives up-to-date and accurate scientific names, based on the latest genetic research.

There are 60 stunning colour plates showing the whole plant and close-up views of flower spikes and individual florets.

For every copy sold, a contribution will be made to The Wildlife Trusts.

A labour of love

After the stresses and strains of big business, pharmaceutical company boss, Malcolm Johnston, is ready for a well-earned holiday this summer.



Malcolm in his office environment

experienced shepherd, as well as finding out a bit more about English Nature and what it does."

Malcolm has volunteered before, helping the National Trust with pond clearing and rhododendron removal. A charity trustee and parish councillor, he feels that volunteering is also motivated by a feeling of duty to 'give something back.'

He said, "I am looking forward to working on such a worthwhile project and learning about the different types of sheep and how they contribute to nature conservation."

and have been brought in to hold back invasive silver birch.

Malcolm said, "To me it's the perfect holiday, if you love the countryside, like animals and enjoy being active. I'll be doing some good physical labour, working outdoors and learning to do things in a different way. I'll get to see more of the beautiful Yorkshire countryside and pick up knowledge from a local person."

There will be lots for him to experience, promises Chris, including gathering the sheep from the common after lambing, weaning the wethers, or young males, from their mothers, and vaccinating and worming the new lambs.

Malcolm is not an absolute beginner, though. With a long-standing interest in animal husbandry and plans to take up small-scale sheep farming on retirement, he embarked on a shepherding course at Writtle Agricultural College, in Essex. He has also helped a friend with his flock of Roussin sheep, a French breed.

He said, "I have the technical knowledge but lack the important hands-on experience. It's all very well learning from lectures and books, but it's not the same as, literally, getting out in the field. I will be learning from a highly



Hebridean sheep on Strensall Common

But Malcolm, 48, from Good Easter, in Essex, won't be stretched out on a beach this August. He will be rolling up his sleeves and getting down to some hard graft as a volunteer shepherd out in the Yorkshire countryside.

English Nature has arranged for him to spend a week with tenant sheep farmer Chris Dunn, on Strensall Common SSSI in the Vale of York. Malcolm will be helping with the Dunn family's flock of 1,750 Swaledales and the MoD's 150 Hebridean sheep which are cared for by Chris.

He will assist the Restoring the Heaths of the Vale of York (Tomorrow's Heathland Heritage) Project. This five-year Heritage Lottery-funded scheme uses grazing sheep to restore the last remaining heathland to the right condition for native wildlife, encouraging plants like heather and marsh gentian and birds like woodlark and nightjar. Hebridean sheep are good browsers



Hebridean sheep



Nursery search to protect bat babies

Barbastelle bat

Moccas Park National Nature Reserve, in Herefordshire, is one of the most important sites in the world for its outstanding collection of veteran trees and the rare insects they support.

Peter Wakeley/English Nature



Ancient Oak at Moccas Park NNR

Now a rather different community has found a use for the gnarled oaks and chestnuts on the reserve. English Nature staff who manage the site believe the trees' hollows and loose bark are being turned into cosy crèches by colonies of rare barbastelle bats.

This is good news from a biodiversity point of view, as there are only a handful of known nurseries for barbastelle bats in England. But it poses a problem when the time comes for the tree surgery which is vital to the veterans' health.

Site Manager, Tim Dixon, said, "The 'Barbies' appeared last summer in good numbers, and we are pretty certain that they are having their babies in our veteran trees. The trouble is, we have no idea which ones have bats inside. What we really don't want, is to find the families by disturbing or even injuring them when we are working on the trees."

Improved survey techniques and modern detectors led to the discovery of the elusive bats when the Vincent

Wildlife Trust (VWT) surveyed Herefordshire in 2003. In partnership with the VWT, which specialises in mammal conservation, English Nature staff have come up with a way of pinpointing the bat family homes.

When darkness falls, and the barbastelle mums are out foraging, volunteers set about trapping them in suspended mist nets, similar to the ones used for ringing birds. The team can then attach radio tags to the captured bats, so they can be tracked to their maternity-roosts when daylight falls.

Tim explained, "We use modern hi-tech ultrasound equipment to detect and record the bats' social calls, then translate their conversations on our computers to identify exactly which species we are seeing. Then we can trace the

barbastelles' flight lines so we know exactly where to set up our mist nets."

The bats are in small colonies of 25-30 females with their offspring, which are usually born in June, and remain dependent and suckling until about September. So the team, including English Nature's volunteer wardens and full-time bat volunteers, will carry on the search throughout the summer.

Once they have pinpointed the nursery trees, they will use aials on long carbon-fibre fishing poles to narrow down the location of the roost to a specific section. Tree surgeons can then steer clear of the bats or, if they are in a part of the tree that must be treated, work will have to be delayed until the lodgers have left for their winter hibernation homes.

"That way we can ensure that their nursery holes will still be there when, hopefully, they return to us next summer," said Tim.

Johnny Birks/Vincent Wildlife Trust



Fran Flanigan of English Nature, left, and Henry Schofield of VWT put up mist nets.

FACTFILE:

Moccas Park NNR:

- has been a working deer park since Norman times;
- has over 1,000 veteran trees;
- is the third most important site in England for rare invertebrates like long-horned beetles and the Moccas hoverfly, a species previously thought to be extinct in the UK;
- is managed by English Nature in agreement with the owner. Visiting is by permit only.

FACTFILE:

The barbastelle bat:

- is one of the UK's rarest bats with an estimated population of 5,000 individuals;
- is between 4–5.5cm long from head to toe and weighs 6–13gm;
- roosts in tree holes, spaces under bark and, sometimes, in buildings;
- feeds mostly on moths taken in flight, plus some insects.

WHAT'S ON? GUIDE

AUGUST–SEPTEMBER

Aug
10

40th Anniversary celebration

10.30–15.00 Ainsdale National Nature Reserve, Sefton coast.

Family activities, chance to spot sand lizards and natterjack toads.

The event will be waymarked from Ainsdale Train Station and Ainsdale Beach so visitors can make the easy 20 minute walk to the reserve.

A bus will run from Ainsdale Train Station to the reserve every half hour.

☎ Contact Nick Haigh on 01704 578 774

Aug
18

Pirates and buried treasure

14.00 Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes NNR, Lincolnshire.

Have some school holiday fun finding out about 18th century smuggling on the Lincolnshire coast. There is no need to book but all potential pirates must be accompanied by an adult.

☎ Contact the Eastern Area Team on 01476 584800

Aug
19–21

The British Birdwatching Fair

09.00–17.30 Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, Rutland

Visit English Nature's stand in Marquee 1, which will focus on the best National Nature Reserves in England. We will be happy to answer questions and there will be lots of information to take away.

Sept
17

Managing a woodland for its wildlife and history

13.00–16.00 Roudsea Wood and Mosses NNR, Cumbria

Get a taste of life as a nature reserve manager, with Roudsea Wood expert Mark Rawlins. (20places)

☎ Contact Rob Petley-Jones on 01539 531604

Sept
18

Guided walk on Thorne Moor

10.30 Humberhead Peatlands NNR, S. Yorkshire

Meet at Moorends Recreation Ground

☎ Contact Janet Canning on 01405 818804

Undercliffs NNR anniversary events

Aug
6

Unrivalled Undercliffs

Walk the seven mile length of the reserve and experience its wildlife and history. Return transportation provided

Aug 24
Sept 4

Jurassic Coast rambles

24 August & 4 September. Join a Jurassic Coast expert to uncover the geological history and fossilised remains

Sept
3 & 4

Evening boat cruises

Up to four boat trips per day during the celebrations, including evening cruises.

Sept
14

Guided circular walks

Morning and afternoon 2-hour circular guided walks through the Undercliffs from Lyme Regis.

☎ Contact the Undercliffs team on 01392 889770

For information on more events, visit: www.english-nature.org.uk/events.asp



FOCUS ON... Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR

Where can you enjoy a great day out for the whole family, complete with seaside, sand dunes and lovable red squirrels?

Peter Wakely/English Nature



Ainsdale Sand Dunes north of Fisherman's Path

A great day out at Ainsdale

The reserve will be marking its 40th birthday on Wednesday, 10 August, with a celebration day for visitors, volunteers and staff. There will be a range of activities for the whole family, a chance to spot the sand lizards and natterjack toads, and to learn about the significance of the sand dunes.

To find out more contact: Nick Haigh 01704 578 774

Or visit www.english-nature.org.uk

Where to walk

The Fisherman's Path snakes for just over a kilometre through pine woodland, (look out for red squirrels and interesting fungi), and on to the sand dune system and sand flats.

The Sefton Coastal Path takes you through Ainsdale NNR along Fisherman's Path and Woodland Path, through pine woodland. Look out for red squirrels, jays, speckled wood butterflies and dune helleborine.

Andy Pickard



Red squirrel at Ainsdale

How to get there

The reserve is just three miles south of the seaside attractions of Southport and sits between the coastal towns of Ainsdale and Freshfield, near Formby.

By car: The reserve can be reached from the A565, but there is no public car park, so visitors are encouraged to use public transport.

The nearest train stations are in Ainsdale and Freshfield on the Southport to Liverpool line. There are bus stops nearby in Gleneagles Drive and Pinfold Lane, Ainsdale.

Great days out

Talking tree stumps tell Stiperstones stories

Visitors to The Stiperstones National Nature Reserve, in Shropshire, will be guided around the site by talking tree-stumps, with the voice of actor Pete Postlethwaite.

In a pioneering project, six special sound boxes have been installed in tree-stumps along a 500 metre all-ability trail leading from the NNR car park. By turning a wheel on the boxes, visitors hear a story about the area.

The tales are tied to the theme of 'the edge' – telling of animals living on the edge of extinction, heathland on the edge of farmland, or people living on the economic edge because of the harsh upland conditions.

The recordings were created by the Dog Rose Trust, a charitable organisation which specialises in improving access for people with visual impairments, helped by Brassed Off and Jurassic Park star, Pete Postlethwaite, who lives locally and enjoys visiting the reserve. There are also tactile maps of the route and instructions in Braille and large print.

Site Manager, Tom Wall, said, "The trail is suitable for everyone, including people using wheelchairs, children in pushchairs and visually impaired visitors. Using the sound boxes means that everyone will have access to high-quality information when they visit."

Stiperstones NNR includes the major part of the Stiperstones ridge in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is the best area of upland heath in the midlands, and the ridge, sculpted millions of years ago in the last ice age, has national geological significance. One of the best times to visit is in late summer when heather and gorse are in bloom.



Pete Postlethwaite demonstrates the talking tree stumps

The Golden Age of the Undercliffs

This year is the golden anniversary of the Axmouth to Lyme Regis Undercliffs National Nature Reserve, a

Tim Banks



Fallen boulders on Downlands cliff

spectacular example of landslipped cliffs. It is an ideal time to visit, as English Nature has been awarded a £28,800 Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the *Understanding the Undercliffs* project. This has increased interpretation facilities and enhanced views of the site. There will be free celebration events throughout the jubilee year.

The project will be carried out by a partnership of English Nature, East Devon District Council, Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site Team, Jurassic World Heritage Site Trust and East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.

Volunteers will be helping with events including boat cruises – a relaxing way to view the wild seven-mile coastline with its stunning geology, biology and earth movements. There will be boat trips for schools and a celebration day at the end of the school summer holidays.

All the celebration events are free, but booking is essential. For details, see What's On, page 15. For further information visit www.english-nature.org.uk/undercliffs or call 01392 889770.

Out in the hills

On the western end of the South Downs, enjoying spectacular views over the Solent, is the Old Winchester Hill NNR.

Here, visitors can find the remains of a hill fort, believed to have been the settlement of a Celtic chieftain. Ox-eye daisies flower during July, as well as rare round-headed rampion on the south-facing slope of the fort. Butterflies, like the chalkhill blue, thrive on the hillside during the summer, while the woodland is home to dormice, badgers and deer.

The landscape has evolved over various periods of history. Among Bronze Age burial mounds, there are also some smaller hollows created during World War II when the hill was used as an army firing range. (Visitors are advised to keep to the well-marked paths to avoid these areas.)

Old Winchester Hill is on the west and south facing scarp slopes of the Meon Valley with the nearest town of Warnford, two miles to the north west.

Paul Glendell/English Nature

Gardening with wildlife in mind

Peter Wakely/English Nature



Wasteland planted with wildflowers

Flowery summer meadows, cut for hay in the traditional way, are now a very rare sight in the countryside, **writes Steve Berry.**

Why not try and create a miniature version in your garden? It takes effort but if you succeed, the rewards can be high. Even a pocket-sized piece of flower-rich grassland may quickly draw in bees, butterflies and other insects, and birds will follow. But it's best not to be too ambitious, too soon. Experiment with a small area, then expand later in the light of experience.

Meadows have largely disappeared from farmland as they have been fertilised out of existence. Few wildflowers can compete with heavy duty grasses. For the same reason, a garden lawn may seem an unlikely place for a meadow – often, the soil is just too rich.

In that case, you really need to bite the bullet and remove the topsoil altogether. Much of it may come away with the turf but, if not, keep scraping until you have a well-drained and well-raked subsoil. Make sure this is free of persistent species like couch grass and ground elder, then sow the area with a mixture of grasses and wildflowers.

Watch out for, and quickly remove, invaders like thistles and nettles, especially early on. Germination of wildflower seed can be erratic so you may need to be patient and persistent. It will be worth it!

English Nature's leaflet – *Wildflower meadows and how to create them* – contains a wealth of advice. Call our Enquiry Service on 01733 455100 for a free copy.

Concern grows after grassland survey

A survey by English Nature, Defra and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee has raised serious concerns over the state of important grassland sites which do not have the protection of a statutory designation.

Species-rich lowland grassland has become so rare and fragmented that it has been highlighted as a priority under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, but information is sparse on the condition of those areas outside the network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

The survey, commissioned to fill this knowledge gap, reviewed the condition of 500 randomly selected grasslands within the five lowland priority types – lowland calcareous grassland; lowland dry acid grassland; lowland meadows; upland hay meadows; purple moor grass and rush pastures.

The results were worrying. Only 21 per cent of these grasslands were in favourable condition compared to 53 per cent within SSSIs. Upland hay meadows and lowland meadows fared worst, with only seven per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, in favourable condition.

Clare Pinches, English Nature's Grassland Ecologist, said, "The most common reason for grasslands of all types being considered to be in poor condition, was the low numbers and frequency of species that indicate good quality semi-natural grasslands.

"Undergrazing was a problem on calcareous and acidic lowland grassland, where vegetation was often so long that desirable plant species, such as birdsfoot trefoil or tormentil were unable to compete."

It's not all bad news, however, as the survey found that grasslands within agri-environmental agreements were almost twice as likely to be in favourable condition. It is hoped that Defra's new Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme will afford greater protection to good sites and help to restore degraded sites.

Paul Glendell/English Nature



Upwood Meadows National Nature Reserve



SHARING THE FRUITS OF OUR SCIENCE

Scientific understanding and knowledge are vital to making sound decisions on nature conservation. English Nature shares its scientific information with others through a series of Research Reports.

Where can you find out about deer management on National Nature Reserves or radio tracking studies of greater horseshoe bats? The answer lies within an English Nature Research Report (ENRR 173/496).

English Nature conducts and commissions a broad range of research, including field and questionnaire surveys, policy and technique reviews, and studies of threatened plants, animals and habitats.

Dr Keith Duff, English Nature's Chief Scientist, said, "The research is vital to guide and inform our conservation work but we believe it's just as essential to make the results available to others to help them with their work. Our reports enable us to share information, ideas and best practice. They also highlight future research priorities and allow us to report on workshops and conferences to a wider audience."

English Nature's science specialists also publish their work in books and refereed journals. They present their research at conferences in the UK and abroad.

The total number of English Nature Research Reports has now topped the 600-mark. They are available to download from the website (www.english-nature.org.uk) or you can request a hard copy from the Enquiry Service (Call 01733 455100/1/2 or email enquiries@english-nature.org.uk). Recently-published reports have a 'Research Information Note' to provide a handy summary.

ENRR Update

Topics of recent reports include:

- Urban effects on lowland heaths (No. 623)
- Schedule 8 fungi, taxonomic research (No. 625)
- Shapwick Heath NNR – swallowtail feasibility study (No. 631)
- UK strategy for sustainable development (No. 638)

ENRR 626 – Going, going, gone? The cumulative impact of land development on biodiversity in England.

During the last century, England's biodiversity suffered a major decline, mainly caused by human activities. The quality of what remains is still under threat from the impacts of development, particularly habitat loss, fragmentation, disturbance and pollution. Individual occurrences may not be very significant in themselves, yet the total effect can cause serious problems for ecosystems and a consequent loss of biodiversity.

This ENRR outlines the first stage of a process to look at the cumulative effects of current and foreseeable development on biodiversity. It aims to analyse these effects and to establish a framework for further research.

Peter Wakely/English Nature



Fire damage at Turbary and Kinson Commons, Dorset.

ENRR 632 – The marsh fritillary butterfly in the Avalon Marshes, Somerset: A study on habitat restoration and the re-establishment potential.

The marsh fritillary became locally extinct in this area in 1995. As a highly threatened UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, re-establishment is desirable.

English Nature carried out research in partnership with Butterfly Conservation to investigate whether sustainable re-establishment is feasible, and to identify suitable measures for habitat restoration. Experiments included looking at different management regimes to achieve a quick increase in devil's-bit scabious, the butterfly's host plant which has suffered a severe decline.

The report, covering the first year of the study, concludes that a sustainable re-establishment is feasible, but significant habitat restoration is necessary. It recommends measures to achieve this.

Peter Burgess / Butterfly Conservation



Marsh fritillary

Paradise Preserved

Hidden in the heart of every town and city are some unlikely wildlife havens.

Cemeteries were created with a specific role – as places to bury and remember the dead. But they are also peaceful pockets of greenspace where people can exercise, relax or study, and enjoy nature and local history.

Many were developed from greenfield sites and retain habitats like heaths and hedges, supporting a range of plants and animals. Historic monuments often become bat or bird roosts and a variety of stone helps people understand more about geology.



Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol

Under increasing pressure for burial space, cemetery managers strive to balance the need to conserve this wealth of historic and natural treasures.

English Heritage and English Nature have put together guidelines for local authorities, conservationists and cemetery managers, to explain their historic, wildlife and landscape value. *Paradise Preserved* has been updated to coincide with the recent Home Office review of burial law and policy and is due to be reissued in the next few months.

English Heritage Senior Landscape Adviser, Jenifer White, explained, “We aim to show the inter-relationship between the historic and natural environment and how managing for both can be complementary.

“Victorians combined formal and natural features, planting trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants that evoke an atmosphere of mourning and contemplation. Cemeteries were set out as places to meditate and enjoy the environment, so the fact they have become wildlife havens fits with the original concept.”

Cemeteries support wildlife like badgers, common lizard, grass-snake, common toad, hedgehog, woodmouse, wren and blackcap as well as a surprising variety of wildflowers, and fungi like waxcaps and lichens.

Some are locally important sanctuaries for uncommon or protected species like bats, spotted flycatcher, slow-worm, stag beetle and orchids that are rare in towns and cities.

Broadway cemetery, Peterborough, has the largest population of meadow saxifrage in Cambridgeshire. Morden Cemetery in London has the city’s only green winged orchids, and in The Rosary, in Norwich, heather and wood speedwell survive from the days when the site was a heathland beyond the city.

Cemeteries are part of the green corridor networks of parks, gardens and open spaces that let wildlife move from site to site and to the countryside beyond.

Many have been given conservation designations. Abney Park, London, Tower Hamlets, London, and Bisley Road, in Stroud, Gloucestershire, now have LNR status, while the “Magnificent Seven” London cemeteries are all identified as having Importance for Nature Conservation.



A combination of formal and natural features

A cutting edge creation

A special grass-cutting machine has been created to help churchyard managers tidy around historic monuments while managing for wildlife.

The God’s Acre Trimmer (GAT) was designed by Autoguide Equipment of Wiltshire, in co-operation with English Nature, English Heritage and the God’s Acre Project, a Hereford Diocesan community project which advises on grassland management as part of its churchyard conservation work.

The GAT uses swinging plastic blades to cut through summer “thatch” left when grassland is uncut for summer flowers and insects. It then turns into a strimmer to skirt around precious stonework. It is “parishioner-friendly” emitting a deeper noise than the piercing whine of many strimmers.

It is available from this summer by contacting Autoguide on 01380 850885, or email sales@autoguide.co.uk

For more information on the God’s Acre Project contact 01568 611154 or email info@cfga.fsnet.co.uk