

Burial Grounds – a wildlife sanctuary!

Burial Grounds are relatively undisturbed by people and have not generally been sprayed with chemical fertilisers and pesticides nor have they been drained or ploughed. The general lack of “agricultural improvements” and the quiet nature of burial grounds often results in them becoming a wildlife sanctuary. They comprise a wide range of habitat types from gravestones and church walls to trees, shrubs and grassland. As such they can support a wide range of species, including protected species such as slow worms and bats. Due to the rarity of stone outcrops elsewhere in the landscape, churchyards are especially important as hosts for lichen and mosses. It is crucial to have the support from the local community, when managing burial grounds with wildlife in mind and it needs to be respected that a burial ground’s principle role is to be a place of commemoration.

A local **Biodiversity Action Plan for Burial Grounds**, launched in 2000, recognized their importance for wildlife. This plan has been reviewed in 2007/08. Below is an overview of the main objectives and some example actions. It would be great if you can get inspired to contribute towards them!

The objectives of the Burial Grounds Action Plan are to **assess and monitor our existing habitat, keep the extent of and protect wildlife rich burial grounds**. We want to **create more areas of biodiverse burial grounds** which means areas of existing burial grounds being transformed into wildlife-rich habitat. Another objective is to **manage and enhance the burial grounds**. A very important objective is to **raise awareness for wildlife on burial grounds and to increase access and involvement for the local community**.

Example of Burial Grounds actions:

- Carry out surveys of burial grounds
- Work with burial ground managers to manage areas of burial ground for wildlife, e.g. leaving long grass, log piles etc
- Work with burial ground managers and Parochial Church Councils to develop and implement burial ground management plans, also consulting the wider community
- Organise wildlife events



Photo: Natural England

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities, statutory agencies, conservation charities and the local Records Centre work together in partnership towards achieving actions outlined in the local Biodiversity Action Plans. To learn more about the Biodiversity Action Plans or to share how you are contributing towards these actions, please visit:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/biodiversity-partnership or contact the coordinator Fabiola Blum on 01223 715697.