

Highlights of 2004-5

Welcome to the report from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership. You will find updates on our projects and information on our newly set up Biological Records Centre.

Our work to date has brought us several awards which have helped to raise the profile of what we are trying to achieve and inspire others. Most recently we picked up a Green Apple Award for our Farmers Biodiversity Pack to add to awards for our Biodiversity Checklist for Developers and our 50 Year Wildlife Vision Map.

Donna Radley, (English Nature Conservation Officer) the Chair of Biodiversity Partnership says,

'The Biodiversity Partnership has become a crucial part of the work to protect our existing wildlife and wild places. Through projects such as the 50 year vision map and Nature in Your Neighbourhood, many more people understand the needs of our wildlife and what the Partnership is supporting. On behalf of the

Partnership I would like to thank all those people who work so hard for wildlife in our area, as volunteers and as part of our everyday work. Much has been achieved but there is still a great deal to do, especially in our changing times.'

We hope to keep you up to date about our work but if you want to know more please contact Catherine Weightman on tel: 01223 718573 or email: catherine.weightman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk



Catherine Weightman, the Partnership's co-ordinator, collects a Green Apple Award at the Houses of Parliament.

Background to the formation of the Partnership

In 1992 international commitments were made during the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, and in 1994 the UK Government launched 'Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan'. Plans for habitats and species provided a framework for action.

The Biodiversity Partnership was formed in 1996, by a number of organisations concerned about the loss and decline of habitats and species in the county.

Work began on producing our own 45 local Biodiversity Action Plans. These target both our common and rarer habitats and species identifying four aims:

1. to record and monitor our wildlife;
2. to manage existing wildlife sites;
3. to create and enhance habitats;
4. to involve as many people as possible in this work

Farmers' Biodiversity Pack

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership has produced a Farmers Biodiversity Pack giving easy to use, concise, expert advice on farm management that can benefit the local environment.

All 2,345 farmers / landowners in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been notified of this pack and, to date, more than 700 copies have been requested.

The pack is proving to be a very timely publication with the changes in the allocation of farming support and ever greater emphasis on the protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment.

This pack can be obtained online from www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countryside/biodiversity/partnership/farmers_pack.htm or please email catherine.weightman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk



Nature in Your Neighbourhood

This successful two year project in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund

grant of £84,000. Nature In Your Neighbourhood gave support and advice to 28 community groups on how

they could improve their local green spaces for wildlife. Some examples are illustrated below.



Volunteers digging a pond in Peterborough



Residents planting wildflowers at Edgecomb flats, Cambridge.



Volunteers involved in the creation of a riverside walk at Great Shelford

On the Verge of Something Good!

Protected road verges in the county will be clearly marked this summer thanks to the County Council's volunteer verge warden scheme.

Volunteer verge wardens will be placing new plaques on the wooden posts already positioned at the end of each verge to alert people to the protected status of the site. There are 90 protected road verges in Cambridgeshire, which represent the largest area of unimproved grassland in the county.

Cambridgeshire's Protected Verge Warden volunteers have been keeping an eye on the many verges alongside our roads for 3 years. Some protected road verges do not have a warden and the scheme is keen to hear from anyone interested in protecting these natural habitats.

Please contact
Susannah O'Hanlon
County Council
Biodiversity
Officer 01223
717930.



Partnership Arable Weed Survey

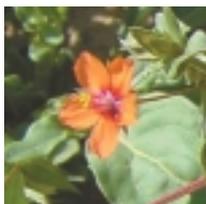
Arable weeds are wild plant species growing in cultivated fields. Many were once common, but are now rare and declining due to farming practices and climate change. This survey was commissioned by South Cambridgeshire District Council on behalf of the partnership, the purpose being to record rare arable weeds. Eleven landowners gave permission for a sample of their land to be surveyed. Of the 118 arable weed species recorded, 13 species were also found on the list of arable rarities for South Cambridgeshire.



Venus's looking glass



A Speedwell



Scarlet Pimpernel



Peterborough Wet Woods Project

Wet woodland is a priority Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), habitat. Peterborough City Council, Environment Agency and Forestry Commission appointed a Project Officer who identified wet woodland habitat in the Peterborough district. Some 78 hectares of wet woodland habitat across 73 sites were found, the majority being distributed along the Rivers Nene and Welland.

The second phase of the project, to exploit habitat creation opportunities, has been continued by officers of the partnership organisations. In order to further increase the habitat gains, a short term post is being funded.

Water Vole Recovery Project

The Partnership has funded a 2 year part time Water Vole Project Officer, Amanda Proud.

The water vole is still widespread but it has undergone major decline and this project is trying to help to reverse that trend. Amanda is monitoring the existing populations as well as giving advice and training on good habitat management for water voles.



Photo: Brian Armstrong



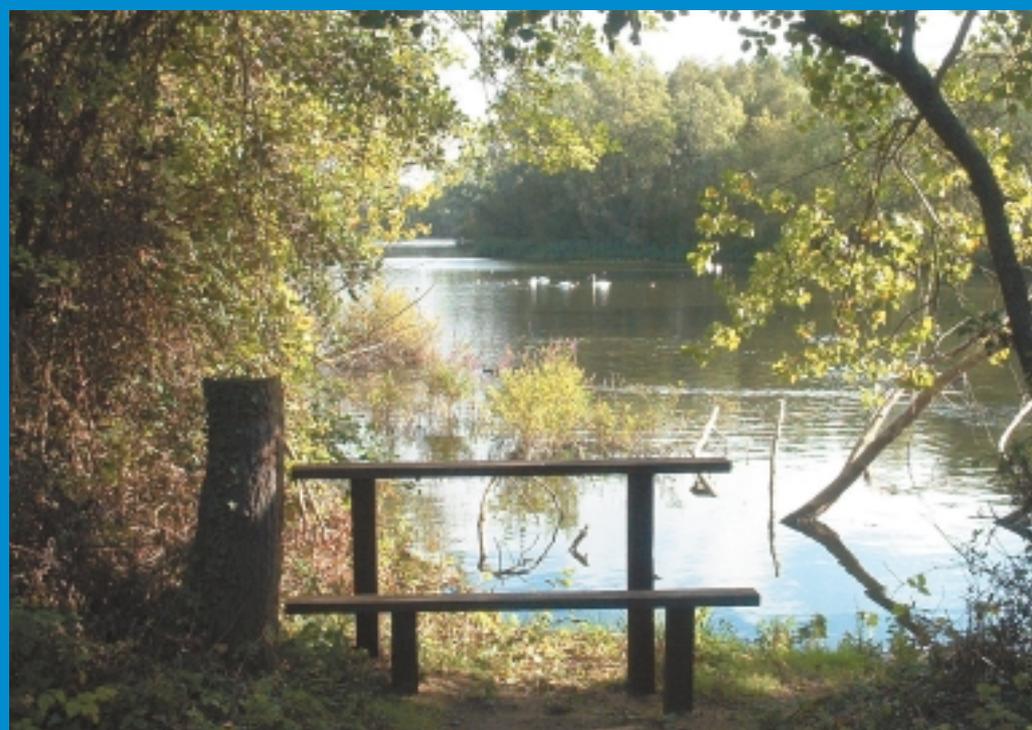
Water Vole. Photo: John Trail

The Ouse Valley Project

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership, along with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, are working with landowners in the Ouse valley to create and improve areas of wet woodland and wet meadows.



Wildflower walk



Ouse Valley gravel pit

Photos: Jim Stevenson

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre – CPBRC

Data on species and habitats is vital for good planning and land management, as well as for monitoring progress towards targets set in local and national biodiversity action plans. Currently information on biodiversity is held in many different formats by many different organisations and individuals to a wide range of standards. The poor access to quality information at present has led to a grant award by Heritage Lottery Fund contributing £224,000, to be spent over 3 years, towards the set up of an accessible one stop shop for biological data.

Manager James Jacomb, Data Officer Louise Bacon and the Community Officer Christine Whinney are in post. The CPBRC has produced its first publication, a provisional mammal atlas. This is available from CPBRC. The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB3 6DH. Please enclose an A5 SAE. (35p stamp)

The establishment of CPBRC will provide a single gateway to biological information for all, ensuring a better use of resources.

BARS—Biodiversity Action Reporting System

BARS is a national information system that supports the planning, monitoring and reporting requirements of national, local and company Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). It also allows users to learn about the progress being made with local and national BAPs. Using information supplied to and held by CPBRC it is possible to report on our progress in meeting both national and local targets, and identifying where we need to do more.

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

Orchard BAP

The Partnership is working with the East of England Apples and Orchard Project to deliver the Orchard BAP. An orchard survey has now identified all the remaining traditional orchards in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The next step is to survey these orchards for specific wildlife e.g. mosses and beetles.

From Nov 2005 all 16 local Cambridgeshire and Peterborough apple varieties will be on sale through the Apples and Orchard Project. www.applesandorchards.org.uk



Photo: Val Perrin

Cam Catchment Sustainable Farming Project

This is a collaborative project working to enhance biodiversity and reduce the adverse impact of agriculture in the River Cam catchment area. The River Cam rises in the chalk to the south of Cambridge. River and riverside habitats support a number of rare or threatened species, including otter and spined loach. Several farm walks have been organised and advice given to farmers.

In addition a small scale partnership between SCDC, RSPB, and EA, has been working on chalk river habitat enhancement at the Fowlmere Nature Reserve.



Photo: Rob Murgovan

Priorities for the Future

- ◆ To continue to seek funding to achieve the targets within our local BAP. Secure funding for the management of the County Wildlife Sites.
- ◆ Work with the local development frameworks and community strategies to help protect our wildlife and wild spaces, and seek gains for biodiversity targets.
- ◆ Work with Cambridgeshire County Council to seek funding for the Living Land project for the protection and enhancement of natural habitats and the biodiversity they support. Three Living Land projects officers over a five year period will work to encourage and enable local people to better appreciate, conserve and improve their green spaces.
- ◆ To promote the work of the partnership and ensure the public understand the WOW (Wealth of Wildlife) factor and suggest ways in which everyone can help.



For further information and for contributions to future reports, please contact:

Catherine Weightman, Co-ordinator, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership
Tel: 01223 718573 email: catherine.weightman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

For Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Action Plans visit:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countryside/biodiversity/partnership/baps

In Partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, Environment Agency, East Cambs District Council, English Nature, Fenland District Council, Forestry Commission, Huntingdon District Council, Peterborough City Council, RSPB, Rural Development Service, South Cambs District Council, Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants and Peterborough