



Local Biodiversity Action Plan Update 2004

Over the past year North East LBAP partners have focussed on action for **water voles, red squirrels, bats, farmland, the coast, lowland raised bogs, species-rich grassland, wet & riparian woodland, urban wildlife and business & biodiversity**. Read on for more details.

LIFE RAFTS FOR RATTY!



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A new action project, funded by LBAP partners and Scottish Natural Heritage, is making headway to safeguard North East water voles. In February Laura Taylor started as Water Vole Conservation Officer, employed by Aberdeen University for North East LBAP. Laura's work involves working with gamekeepers, ghillies and river boards to target the voles' main threat - the American mink, and monitoring mink and water vole populations. The mink, a non-native, generalist predator, is also a threat to nesting birds.

Innovative survey rafts, developed by the Game Conservancy Trust, are being installed on the Dee, Ythan and Deveron to detect the presence of mink, which leave footprints on a clay pad in a tunnel on the raft. Once mink are known

to be present a trap can be set. The rafts have proved effective, focusing trapping effort on sites where mink are known to occur. Working in close liaison with researchers from the University, this project will also help us to find out more about mink distribution and their dispersal capabilities across the region.



Dredging of field drains and damage to banks by cattle trampling can also be catastrophic for vole populations, particularly on lowland farms, and it is illegal to destroy sites where water voles

occur. The Water Vole Officer and other LBAP partners (NFU Scotland, FWAG, SAC, Ythan Project) are providing advice to land managers regarding best practice to avoid habitat damage. Measures by farmers to reduce the need to dredge can be grant aided under the Rural Stewardship Scheme or addressed by using set-aside buffer strips.

Water vole action received good publicity in 2003-04 through local papers, BBC Radio Scotland *Out of Doors* in October and *Landward* on BBC 2 in January 2004. Many different groups care for the plight of our water voles. Through LBAP, these interests are coming together to pool expertise and resources in determined action to save North East Water Voles.

For the full action plan and progress updates see www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk



Biodiversity is the variety of life. It includes all living things and their environments. The North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) is a framework for action by local people and organisations to conserve the precious wild species and habitats of this region. LBAP focuses action on both national and local biodiversity priorities.

Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity is central to achieving **sustainable development** - to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



Managing Woods for Reds

The Forestry Commission now considers the conservation needs of red squirrels in all new planting, felling and replanting schemes in Grampian, with special attention given to schemes on Deeside and Donside. The present focus for action is on the woodland buffer zones where the two species meet. The Forestry Commission, National Trust for Scotland and Aberdeen City Council are now actively planting or promoting species which favour red squirrels, e.g. Scots pine, Norway spruce, while tactically limiting the planting of large masted broadleaves, e.g. beech, that may benefit the spread of grey squirrels. The Grampian Squirrel Group continue to collect records of all squirrels, and NESBReC has produced maps of the data in relation to key woodlands to help target action. Local squirrels received good publicity when FC and SWT's squirrel rope bridge across the River Ythan caught *Reporting Scotland's* attention last autumn, whilst squirrels now have easy access into Gight Reserve.



Bats in Bridges and Boxes

Aberdeen Bat Group have been spreading the word about bat protection to both professionals and public - alerting Aberdeenshire Council Transport and Infrastructure staff to the need to check for bats before starting work with trees and bridges, and talking to local people at the BP Family Fun day at Duthie Park in Aberdeen. Fun Day participants and Aberdeen City Council Rangers also made 100 bat boxes, to supplement natural roost sites at Duthie Park and Dyce Riverside.



Sand, Shingle, Sea and Salt

Fishing, oil and tourism industries play an important role in the North East's economy and all rely on coastal resources. The North East's coastal habitats, from sand dunes to sea cliffs, mudflats to salt marshes, also support a wealth of biodiversity. Action for the coast got underway in 2003 with LBAP coastal events in Findhorn and Aberdeen/Forvie, attended by over 60 professionals and interested amateurs. Thanks to the Moray Coast Ranger, RSPB, Aberdeen Harbour Board, SNH and all the speakers at these two events for their valuable contributions. Collective action from a wide range of people and communities is crucial for coastal habitats, and both events enabled people to air their ideas and provide input to the draft Action Plans. **The Coastal Sand Dunes and Shingle Action Plan** is now out for final consultation, and action groups are developing plans for **Estuarine and Intertidal Habitats** and **Coastal Cliffs and Heaths**.

For details see www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/habitatspecies.htm

Farmers Watch Out for Wildlife

The NE Farm Biodiversity Group continue to meet regularly to take forward the Farmland Action Plan implementation. Their latest project, assisted by a graphics expert from Aberdeenshire Council, is a promotional tractor cab sticker for machinery operators, highlighting how they can reduce risk to, and even help, wildlife. Ask LBAP for details.



Natural Care for Grampian's Bogs

Lowland raised bogs are one of Scotland's most unique and internationally rare habitats. The launch of SNH's Natural Care Grampian Lowland Bog Scheme at Scottish Wildlife Trust's Red Moss of Netherley reserve in July marked the start of determined action and incentives for landowners to bring existing designated sites under positive management. SWT and BTCV have already started with action on scrub clearance and installing dams to raise the water table at Reidside Moss near Huntly.



Wildflowers on the Verge

Important remnants of semi-natural grassland, containing species that have been all but lost from other areas, can survive on road verges if managed properly. Guided by the LBAP Action Group, Aberdeenshire Council has developed a species-rich verge signposting and management scheme, and is starting to manage several sites to maintain/increase species diversity. Although it's still early days, two sites being managed under this initiative have improved distinctly.

Trees on the Floodplain

An important approach to riparian woodland action is habitat creation and restoration following inappropriate conifer plantations. In the Ythan area, the Ythan Project and Forestry Commission have been removing conifers from the floodplain at Gight to allow native trees to regenerate. Also, Ythan Project and local landowners have been very active in planting broad-leaved trees at 25 riparian sites along the Ythan and its' tributaries, planting over 1,400 trees by 2005.

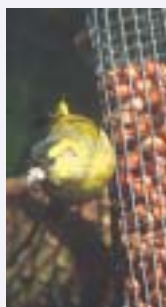


Biodiversity on your Doorstep

Local people in Elgin have been encouraged to find out more about the wonderful local wildlife resource of **The Wards** through new interpretation panels about "Peat Marshes Watery Home" installed by The Moray Council, and a new boardwalk will soon be added. The Moray Coast Ranger and local people have been collecting, propagating and re-sowing heather, crowberry and red campion along **The Moray Coast**. At **Kincorth Hill** in Aberdeen, children from Abbotwells Primary School planted 400 plugs on the edge of the Kincorth Hill Local Nature Reserve near Kincorthland towerblock, and 15 people attended a summer event on There's More to Flowers than You Think.

Gardens for Life

Wildlife-friendly gardening is being promoted as part of the Urban Areas Action Plan. Whether in your own garden, window box, community or school garden, this is action for biodiversity that everyone can do. We promoted this idea for Backyard Biodiversity



Day with a brief feature on The Beechgrove Garden in May. The focus for 2003-04 was Stonehaven, with various events since June. Stonehaven Horticultural Society hosted a wildlife gardening

talk by Aberdeenshire's Head Ranger, Fred Gordon, last autumn and everyone took away a free local provenance wild flower. LBAP staff also attended local flower shows and a bird box building event in association with the local

Ranger. Like Ellon and Aberdeen, Stonehaven now has a wildlife gardening category in the local competition. On a wider scale, LBAP wildlife gardening articles are featured each month in the local press.

Promoting and Protecting Biodiversity

A crucial aspect of the Urban Areas Plan is to identify, survey and record areas of particular biodiversity interest to be protected by the planning process. NESBReC's 'Promoting and Protecting Biodiversity in the North East of Scotland' Habitat Field Survey, launched in 2003, uses the Integrated Habitat System (IHS), and will help LBAP to facilitate action, as well as improve general biodiversity knowledge across the region.



Biodiversity Advice for Businesses

North East LBAP's Business Advisor, Jonathan Young, has visited over 30 businesses over the past year or so, to provide practical advice on how companies can take action on their own sites or through their business operations to help local biodiversity. For example, Aberdeen Harbour Board sponsored the LBAP Coast seminar last autumn, BAA Scotland have developed a draft BAP for Aberdeen Airport, and PGL in Banchory are liaising with Aberdeenshire Ranger Service to help a local school environmental project. Jonathan's work was funded by Scottish Enterprise Grampian.

To help companies further their biodiversity projects, LBAP has published Biodiversity Advice Notes for Businesses which can be downloaded from www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/business.htm





COMING UP IN 2004 . .

Monthly Biodiversity Events by many organisations across the NE are shown on www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk or phone LBAP for details.

25 May

Launch of Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
Edinburgh

29 May

Sand Dune Spectacular Walk
For the Formartine Festival of Land and Sea
Balmedie Country Park
Tel: Coastal Rangers
01358 742396

29 May

Green City Fun Day
Aberdeen Beech

Summer/Autumn

Rivers and Burns Action event
Aberdeenshire

Developing New Action Plans for:

- Wood Pasture, Parkland & Boundary Trees;
- Coastal Heaths and Cliffs;
- Broadleaved Woodland;
- Wetland.

Contact LBAP for more details.



Help take Action for NE Wildlife

North East Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) are developed through working groups facilitated by the Biodiversity Co-ordinator. Anyone and everyone with an interest in a particular habitat or species can get involved in developing the action plans, so there is a shared commitment in progressing the actions.

To get involved, or for more information on North East Biodiversity, please contact:-

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Or see the website

www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk



THANKS

to all partners for their continued support and funding for the LBAP.

North East Scotland LBAP Steering Group Members are

Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, NFU Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Executive Environmental and Rural Affairs Department, Scottish Landowners Federation, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission for Scotland, The Moray Council, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The University of Aberdeen, an Education Consultant

With additional support and funding from

BP, Aberdeen Countryside Project, Scottish Enterprise Grampian

Additional organisations contributing to action plans and working groups include:

Aberdeen Bat Group, Aberdeen Environmental Forum, Aberdeen Harbour Board, Aberdeenshire Environmental Forum, Aberdeenshire Towns Project, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Deveron District Salmon Fisheries Board, Easter Anguston Farm, Ellon Community Council, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Forest Enterprise, Forvie Tree Nursery, Grampian Squirrel Group, Marine Laboratory, Malloch Society, Moray Firth Partnership, National Trust for Scotland, North East Native Woodlands, North East Rivers Project, North East Scotland Biological Records Centre, Rural Environmental Action Project, Scottish Agricultural College, Stonehaven Horticultural Society, Wych Elm Biodiversity Action Group, Ythan District Salmon Fisheries Board, Ythan Project, local businesses, estates and many individual local people.

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