

Countdown 2010

NATURAL
ENGLAND

Natural England's Biodiversity Action Fund – Year One
www.naturalengland.org.uk

New funding for 34 biodiversity projects nationwide

In 2001, at the EU summit in Gothenburg, member states made a commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity in Europe by 2010. The England Biodiversity Strategy is the principal mechanism for delivering actions identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plans which will help achieve this target.

The Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund was launched on 15 December 2005 as a replacement for Defra's Environmental Action Fund (biodiversity stream) which had been running since 1992. A variety of Voluntary Conservation Organisations (VCOs) were awarded £3.8 million from Defra to run 34 projects across all nine Government regions. The projects started in April 2006 and their aims cover direct enhancement of biodiversity, engaging people in conservation work and raising awareness of biodiversity among key stakeholders, community groups and the general public.

Pearl-bordered fritillary. Natural England



The projects include grassland, wetland, woodland and heathland habitats as well as birds, insects, amphibians and marine species.

The projects are now well underway and have already started to achieve major gains for biodiversity. Here are a few highlights:

- **60 hectares** of lowland heathland have been restored in Leicestershire and **three heathland** sites in Hampshire are being brought back into favourable condition by the introduction of grazing.
- **Ten schools** in Sussex have signed up to making major biodiversity improvements to their school grounds, and **12,400 pupils** along the south coast have an increased awareness of marine biodiversity from attending the Cool Seas Roadshows.
- **Two breeding pairs** of stone-curlew have been recorded at Manor Farm in Wiltshire and **72 cirl bunting chicks** were successfully hand reared and released into the wild as part of a reintroduction programme in Cornwall.
- The BTCV has engaged **19,185 volunteers** in biodiversity conservation work on 991 sites across England and the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts is extending opportunities for young people to experience biodiversity through **outdoor education**.
- **4,500 stag beetle sightings** have been recorded by the People's Trust for Endangered Species since the launch of the Great Stag Hunt in June 2006 and Buglife has mapped **350 brownfield sites** in the Thames gateway to help protect invertebrates against development.
- Through successful environmental stewardship applications, over **450 hectares** of farmland in the Stroud Valley will be improved for wildlife and **41 hectares** of farmland in Wiltshire have been reverted to chalk grassland.
- A pioneering project to **control invasive species** within the River Tweed catchment has been recognised as a best practice model by the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Marine Spotlight

Cool Seas Roadshow

The Cool Seas Roadshow is a spectacular new educational initiative from the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), designed to raise public awareness of the wonderful marine wildlife that we have in our UK seas. The project was launched in August 2006, on Blackpool Sands beach in Devon, and will visit 150 schools across England, as well as 37 non-school events before February 2008.

The roadshow features life-size and life-like models of whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles, porpoises and seals in fascinating and interactive workshops delivered by marine education specialists. Audiences are introduced to the full range of UK marine biodiversity, the threats facing it, the importance of its conservation and the small easy steps we can all make to protect this wonderful heritage. As a lasting legacy, MCS has created a suite of educational resources to follow up the roadshow including a Cool Seas action pack booklet and bookmark for every child, classroom posters,



Cool Seas Roadshow event: Marine Conservation Society

and curriculum-linked lesson plans for teachers. So far 45 sessions have been conducted in schools along the south coast, from Kent to Cornwall, resulting in 12,400 pupils having an increased awareness of marine biodiversity and the importance of its conservation. Feedback from these sessions has been very encouraging.

“The children were thrilled by the roadshow and found the talk and props both fascinating and memorable. It was lovely to have something in school so completely different to the norm.”

Freegrounds Junior School,
Southampton

Sealife Diversity

The Sealife Diversity project managed by the Marine Biological Association is all about providing marine biodiversity information and supporting public participation in biodiversity recording.

The project's Learning Zone is a fantastic interactive website that contains images, games, information for amateur naturalists, projects for schools and details about events.

A new waterproof identification guide for seashore species has been produced for the Sealife Survey recording scheme. It contains information on selected priority marine species to encourage and support volunteers with their recording work.

These records are all captured on the Marine Life Information Network (MarLIN) database, and new ways of submitting volunteer records are being explored, such as text messaging.

A full programme of outreach events was carried out between April and September, including Seashore

Seashore safari summer 2006. Marine Biological Association



Safaris where both the public and school children experienced an informal introduction to English rocky shore biodiversity.

Children from primary schools have trained as 'Alien detectives' and are searching their local beaches for non-native species. A-level students and volunteer groups have also been involved with a special project looking at non-native species and climate change indicators to help build a picture of how things are now and how to measure change in the future.

Stand up for Wildlife at Sea

Our marine environment is poorly understood and under serious threat. This project has been working hard to influence new legal and administrative systems to help protect our marine biodiversity.

The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts has played a leading role in developing responses to the Government's Marine Bill consultation, both individually and with other partners through the Wildlife and Countryside Link.

A dedicated Marine Bill Campaign was launched to raise awareness of the Marine Bill and associated issues with all the Wildlife Trusts and their members. This was done through publications such as *Natural World*, *Link* and *Watchword* as well as public surveys and petitions. Posters for displays and stickers for events have been offered to all Trusts to help promote the campaign to their members and the public.

Pink sea fan. Keith Hiscock/MBA



The Wildlife Trusts have also been involved with marine species work and hosted BAP workshops for the basking shark and pink sea fan. A new website for the pink sea fan has been launched, and 20 weeks of basking shark surveys were undertaken off the west coast.

Sustainable Land Management

Pennine Dales Meadow Project (Hay Time)

The Hay Time project aims to enhance and restore species-rich meadows in the North Pennines AONB and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Over the past 75 years there has been a dramatic decline in the extent and quality of species-rich grassland throughout England. This decline is largely due to changes in agricultural practice and has led to a decline in plant, bird and invertebrate species associated with this type of habitat.

The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust will use seed harvested from species-rich meadows to restore meadows that have lost some of their characteristic plants. Two project officers have been employed by the Trust to provide advice to farmers, as well as organising the harvesting and restoration work.

So far, over 70 farmers have been offered advice, resulting in over 35 hectares of meadows being either

New seed harvester at work. Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust



enhanced or restored. This has been done with new seed harvesting and sowing machinery purchased to suit the needs of the project. The project officers have also engaged with the local communities by carrying out guided walks, talks and presentations.

Development of Manor Farm

The RSPB initiated the Chalk Grassland Project with the aim of restoring areas of arable land back to chalk grassland through land acquisition. Some of the best chalk grassland sites in England are in Wiltshire so when a local farm came on the market the RSPB were quick to respond. The farm lies between the chalk grasslands of Salisbury Plain and Porton Down so in time will provide an ecological link between them. Now that the RSPB own the farm they can set about turning most of the area back to grassland. This autumn, over 41 hectares were sown using seed harvested from local flower-rich grasslands.

This site is an important area for stone-curlews. These birds are site faithful and require open ground to nest, which is why they often use arable fields and short grazed turf. The RSPB aims to encourage the birds to nest on special unsown plots within arable



Stone-curlew chick. Patrick Cashman/RSPB

fields, and eventually on a landscape-scale area of species-rich chalk grassland.

In 2006, two pairs of stone-curlew bred at Manor Farm and one chick was successfully fledged. The RSPB also aims to maximise the potential for other farmland bird species such as lapwing, grey partridge, corn bunting, yellowhammer and turtle dove, and in so doing provide a demonstration venue for Higher Level Stewardship prescriptions on a lowland mixed farm. In addition the RSPB are helping to influence the management of a further 300 hectares of chalk grassland on neighbouring farms by offering advice and entering into management agreements.

Culm Natural Networks

Culm Natural Networks run by Devon Wildlife Trust is a two year umbrella programme consisting of four inter-related projects that will enhance the biodiversity of the Culm Charater Area of Devon and Cornwall. This area contains one of the country's rarest grassland habitats, culm grassland.

The first project is to assess how much culm grassland there is. The second offers landowners advice ensuring favourable management of this important habitat. Data has so far been collected on 52 sites in the area. In addition, two previously unrecorded sites have been identified and over 60 farmers have been offered advice.

The third project involves setting up a new grazing links partnership, connecting landowners with local graziers in order to reinstate livestock management on many sites. Grazing has so far been reinstated on

Grazing links partnership. Devon Wildlife Trust



five sites which has involved working with eight different landowners. On one site, cattle have been returned for the first time in over 12 years.

Finally, the fourth element is Confidence in the Countryside, the second phase of a very successful landowner training scheme helping participants maximize economic benefit from their natural asset. Fourteen farm businesses including vegetable producers, cider makers and those with on-farm accommodation have received training, support and encouragement.

Projects supported by the Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund

	Grant Awarded 2006/2008		Grant Awarded 2006/2008
1 Buglife	£157,800	16 Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum	£56,200
2 Butterfly Conservation	£176,000	17 River Wye Preservation Trust	£61,100
3 Cumbria Wildlife Trust	£55,000	18 RSPB	£100,000
4 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust	£50,000	19 RSPB	£112,000
5 Devon Wildlife Trust	£144,500	20 Sheffield Wildlife Trust	£148,600
6 Durham Wildlife Trust	£80,000	21 Somerset Wildlife Trust	£76,000
7 Game Conservancy Trust	£57,000	22 Staffordshire Wildlife Trust	£83,200
8 Groundwork Erewash Valley	£61,200	23 Stroud Valleys Project	£108,000
9 Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust	£198,600	24 Suffolk Wildlife Trust	£72,700
10 Herpetological Conservation Trust	£70,800	25 Sussex Wildlife Trust	£81,600
11 Lancashire Wildlife Trust	£66,400	26 The Friends of Wychwood	£81,500
12 Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust	£52,400	27 The National Trust - Cumbria	£82,700
13 Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	£57,600	28 TWEED Forum	£52,000
14 Marine Biological Association	£105,000	29 Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust	£80,000
15 Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust	£68,600	30 Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust	£270,000

National Projects

• 31 BTCV	£450,000
• 32 Marine Conservation Society	£118,200
• 33 Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts	£300,000
• 34 People's Trust for Endangered Species	£79,200

Natural England works for people, places and nature, to enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promoting access, recreation and public wellbeing, and contributing to the way natural resources are managed so that they can be enjoyed now and in the future.

Funding for Countdown 2010 comes from Defra

Map of England showing projects and regional boundaries

