

Devon Biodiversity Action Plan

CITIES, TOWNS and VILLAGES

- Wildlife is not confined to the countryside, but is to be found in close association with people in gardens, allotments and parks, derelict land, in walls and on roofs, beside canals, on waste tips; in fact anywhere you care to look will contain at least a few and probably a high diversity of species either adapted to the particular conditions of the built environment, or occurring there because a habitat which is also found elsewhere happens to be in an urban* area. Geological exposures are often found in built-up areas in the form of road or cuttings or, more temporarily, during excavations for building developments.
- Whilst Devon has fewer truly “urban” areas than many counties, in addition there are a great many towns and villages scattered throughout the County which constitute essentially built-up environments and this plan shall consider ways in which all these places can be maintained and enhanced for wildlife and earth science conservation, and for the benefit of local inhabitants.
- This Plan covers all places within a largely built-up environment, in cities, towns and villages, which offer opportunities for the enjoyment of wildlife and the earth sciences, including parks (but excluding ancient formal parkland, for which see relevant Action Plan), graveyards, amenity grasslands, school playing fields, gardens and allotments. Those natural and semi-natural habitats and species which happen to fall within urban areas but which are mainly found outside them are treated in the relevant Devon Action Plans.

A Definition

- The great majority of our population lives in settlement of one kind or another, even in Devon which is a county that has a higher proportion of rural dwellers than most.
- As such, the maintenance of biodiversity in the sense that it pertains to our quality of life, needs to be ensured in the places where the majority of people live and work, not only in the natural and semi-natural environments that we call “the Countryside”, although this is of course of vital importance, too.
- People in the built environment benefit from daily contact with wildlife and natural green spaces in many different ways; trees help keep down levels of air-borne pollution; parks and other public green spaces provide a welcome escape from vehicles and a safe and stimulating environment for children’s play; gardens and allotments provide people with intimate contact with greenery and wildlife; in fact a large part of what people in towns and cities call “quality of life” is provided by access to wildlife in one form or another.
- Wildlife conservation projects in towns and cities help to bring local communities together in a concerted way which few other activities can achieve, as well as being a way in which people can positively work to improve their local environment.

Why an Action Plan?

* For the purposes of this document “urban” shall refer to the built environment, including cities, towns and villages.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many species of bird occur in close proximity to man in cities, towns and villages. In fact certain species, such as robins, thrushes and blackbirds, tits and finches positively benefit from man's activities such as digging gardens to expose worms and grubs, as well as the provision of bird tables and feeding stations. Birds of prey such as sparrowhawks have taken advantage of this abundance of food and may be seen even in the most built-up of environments where there are areas of greenery. The spectacular and noisy roosts of starlings, as they gather in their thousands on buildings and trees are a familiar experience to many city-dwellers in autumn and winter. • A great variety of plants are found in cities, towns and villages, depending upon the substrate available. Even species such as dandelions, thistles, rosebay willowherb and other plants often seen as weeds add a splash of colour to areas of derelict land. • Insects benefit from the relatively sheltered and warm microclimate of the built environment, and butterflies, bees, wasps and even crickets and grasshoppers are to be found, the former particularly fond of cultivated and naturalised bushes such as Buddleja - also known as the "butterfly bush"! • Ponds within gardens create environments for a fascinating range of wildlife; dragonflies, newts, frogs, water plants, pond snails and a plethora of tiny and microscopic life as well. • Walls, roofs, gravestones and other expanses of rock-like material, provide ideal natural substitutes for lichens. While certain species occur only in places where the air is exceptionally clean, many are found in built-up areas. The orange-yellow encrusting species such as <i>Xanthoria</i> are particularly noticeable. 	Characteristic Wildlife
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of species distinctive to and widespread in cities, towns and villages in Devon. Species marked (p) are priority UK BAP species and as such have full national action plans prepared. Species marked (c) are on the UK Steering Group Report list of species of conservation concern. • <u>Mammals</u> : Pipistrelle bat (p), hedgehog (c), • <u>Birds</u> : Song thrush (p), blackbird, blue tit, bullfinch (p), siskin (c), house martin, swift • <u>Amphibians</u> : Palmate newt (c), common frog (c), toad, slow worm • <u>Invertebrates</u> : Peacock butterfly, speckled wood, orange tip, hummingbird hawk moth, great green bush-cricket, house spider, woodlouse spider. • <u>Fungi</u> : <i>Agrocybe aegerita</i>, <i>Galerina stylifera</i>, <i>Geastrum fornicatum</i>, <i>Stropharia aurantiaca</i>, <i>Lepiota leucothites</i>, <i>Lyophyllum decastes</i>. • <u>Lichens</u> : <i>Lecanora muralis</i>, <i>Physcia aipolia</i>, <i>P. tenella</i>, <i>Xanthoria partietina</i>, <i>Lepraria lesdainii</i>, <i>Caloplaca flavescens</i>, <i>Cladonia pyxidata</i> • <u>Vascular plants</u> : foxglove, primrose, ivy-leaved toadflax, maidenhair spleenwort. 	Special Species

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no figures currently available for the area of cities, towns and villages in Devon 	Current Extent (1998)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate management of sites, either over-management, incorrect management, insufficient management, or complete neglect. 'Tidying' of urban parks can lead to a uniform land use. • Development pressures; many sites are lost to development. • Pollution, both chemical air and water pollution, and noise pollution • People pressure - urban sites constitute areas of high population and therefore may suffer the effects of over-use or misuse, including fouling by dogs, erosion and disturbance by mountain biking, vandalism, illegal activities such as poaching, air gun abuse, motorbike scrambling, <i>etc.</i> • Conflict of interests on sites; nature conservation very often takes second place to the demands of leisure and sports uses, especially pertinent as lottery funding is generating a large number of such developments. • Lack of public understanding and awareness of the wildlife conservation value of some sites, and of the various opportunities for enhancing wildlife in their gardens and other places. • Lack of resources and best practice information to allow sympathetic conservation management of sites, in relation to other demands on them. 	Current problems for Cities, Towns and Villages in Devon (1998)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon has not experienced particularly large increases in the built environment in recent years, but this may change if Government proposals to build 91,000 new houses by 2011 come to fruition. It is not necessarily desirable to aspire to increase the built-up area, as it may be to the detriment of other habitats of equal or greater value. • Losses of the built environment are rare! Piecemeal losses of semi-natural habitats within the built environment have occurred, but no figures are currently available for this. <p><u>2004 revision:</u> new settlements are proposed for East Devon and the South Hams.</p>	Recent Changes in Extent (1998)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain SSSIs are found within urban areas, including Bonhay Road Cutting Budleigh Salterton Cliffs, Dawlish Cliffs, Faraday Road and Mount Wise, Richmond Walk, Wallsend Industrial Estate (all four Plymouth), Kent's Cavern, New Cut (Torquay), Lummaton Quarry, (geological SSSIs), Exe Estuary, Plymbridge Lane and Estover Road (Plymouth), Berry Head to Sharkham Point, Stoke Woods (only two miles from Exeter city centre). • Plymouth Sound and Estuaries complex is a candidate Special Area of Conservation (under the EU Habitats Directive) and a classified Special Protection Area (under the EU Birds Directive). The Exe Estuary - bordered by Exeter, Topsham, Exmouth and Dawlish - is also a Special Protection Area. Berry Head to Sharkham Point is a candidate SAC. 	Current Site Protection (1998)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan forms a key link in the chain of biodiversity planning running from the National UK Plan, through Regional guidance, to local delivery. <p><u>UK Plan Context</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>UK BAP</u> includes a Habitat Statement for Urban Habitat, with the following Conservation Direction (taken from the web site: www.ukbap.org.uk). <p>⇒ <i>Maintain the existing diversity and extent of wildlife in all urban areas, expanding the range and distribution of rare and common species and enabling this resource to be utilised as an educational tool.</i></p> <p><u>Regional Plan Context</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>South West BAP definition</u>: Greenspaces and associated ecological niches found within built-up areas. Buildings and hard surfaces, which can support important plant and animal communities (e.g. birds of prey nesting in the 'cliffs' of high buildings, lichens) are also considered as part of the urban habitat in this Action Plan. The greenspaces are divided up into four categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Remnants of ancient systems, such as woodland, wetland. ii) Freshwater and estuaries iii) Pre-industrial rural landscapes with arable land, meadows, heathland, grazing marshes and villages iv) Managed greenspaces, including parks, amenity grassland, gardens. v) Naturally seeded urban areas or industrial sites, such as demolition sites, disused railway lands or unexploited industrial landscape. <p>Urban itself is difficult to define - a conurbation of over 10,000 is often cited. It can also include areas within 1 km of the urban fringe. However the concepts contained within the action plan can be extrapolated to any human settlement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Action for Biodiversity in the South West</u> contains a Habitat Action Plan for Urban Habitat, with the following objectives and proposed targets (currently under 	Biodiversity Planning Context

review in 2004):

⇒ *Maintain and enhance the existing diversity and mosaic of wildlife habitats in urban areas. Target : Ongoing.*

⇒ *Expand the range and distribution of rare and selected common species and habitats in urban areas. Target : Ongoing.*

⇒ *Ensure the provision of accessible "natural green space " or "wildspace" within 300 m of every home in the urban area. Target : 50% by 2010, 100% by 2020.*

⇒ *Raise awareness of and encourage community action in wildlife and its management. Target : Ongoing.*

Associated Action Plans within the Devon BAP:

- ⇒ great green bush-cricket
- ⇒ primrose
- ⇒ maritime cliff and slope
- ⇒ rivers streams and flood plains

Please note: preliminary review of targets undertaken in 2004 – requires further examination

Objective 1

Foster greater public understanding and awareness of the built environment as a place for the enjoyment of wildlife and earth sciences.

Target

- Establish a Community Wildlife Group in each settlement of 5000 or more people by 2010.

Objective 2

Ensure the provision of accessible "natural green space" to the populace of towns and cities

Target

- For all new housing developments, ensure that at least the legally required standards for access to green spaces are met.
- For existing urban housing, seek to use any opportunities which arise to increase the provision of green space (where ever possible and appropriate, within 300m of every home).

Objective 3

Expand the range and distribution of common and nationally/locally scarce species and habitats in cities, towns and villages.

Target

- Ongoing.

**Biodiversity Objectives & Targets
for cities, Towns and Villages in Devon**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pursuit of the Objectives set out in this Plan will not only benefit the biodiversity of cities, towns and villages. Conservation has wider benefits and advantages for society, by providing a resource which is the basis of many aspects of the local economy, and by adding to the quality of life of the people of Devon in ways which are beyond financial measure. Thus enhancing the interests of biodiversity enhances the interests of society as a whole. • <u>Improved quality of life for the inhabitants.</u> Contact and involvement with wildlife is, for many people, central to a good quality of life; this is true for people in highly built-up places as it is for those in smaller towns and villages. As well as providing benefits such as improved air quality, and places for children to play, the existence of wildlife areas, no matter how small, adds a spiritual lift to the every day lives of inhabitants. • <u>Enhanced attractiveness of towns and cities.</u> By providing new areas for wildlife and by enhancing existing areas, our towns and cities may become more attractive places to visitors and tourists as well as local residents, leading to the enhancement of local economies. • <u>Educational opportunities.</u> By enhancing opportunities for people's contact with wildlife and earth science, new opportunities for local schools to use local natural areas as part of their curricula are created. This will help to engender a sense of value and understanding by present and future generations of the role of wildlife in the built environment. 	Wider Benefits from Pursuing these Objectives
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------

Priority or Indicative Actions for Cities, Towns and Villages in Devon	
Action	Key Partners
1. Ensure all Local Development Frameworks (& other strategic documents) contain provision for retaining wildlife and earth science interest within housing and other development, to include the provision of nature reserves within all towns and cities in Devon.	LAs; EN; DWT
2. Ensure that the statutory requirements for the provision of green space within new housing developments are met. Where possible, there should be wildlife gain (e.g. habitat creation) in all developments through the use of Section 106 Agreements.	LAs
3. Encourage environmentally friendly building design and landscaping that provides habitat for animals and plants and uses native species.	LAs; DWT; EN; Developers
4. Ensure that urban wildlife sites that meet the criteria for CGS and CWS are identified and designated, with landowners identified and advised on positive management. Where appropriate, establish suitable management agreements.	LAs; EN; DWT; RIGS
5. Ensure maintenance regimes of open spaces within cities, towns and villages enhance the potential for wildlife and enjoyment.	LAs
6. Provide advice on wildlife and earth science conservation to land managers, other professionals and schools to enhance areas to benefit wildlife, earth science and enjoyment.	DWT; EN; Devon RIGS Group; DCC
7. Continue to establish and promote sites of geological and wildlife interest within urban areas which are accessible to the general public and provide suitable on-site interpretative facilities. Encourage the use of these by schools and other educational	LAs; RIGS

establishments.	
8. Raise public awareness and understanding of urban biodiversity for social well-being and enjoyment through campaigns, initiatives, radio and press features and competitions. Promote wildlife gardening through displays in garden centres, etc.	DWT; EN; RSPB; DBWPS; Local Wildlife Groups; DCC; BTO

Cities, Towns and Villages Action Plan Champion – currently not assigned

Abbreviations used in text and table

BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
DBWPS	Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society
DCC	Devon County Council
DWT	Devon Wildlife Trust
EN	English Nature
LAs	Local Authorities
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphological Sites
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds