

There is a new vision for London - a city where the conservation of biodiversity is integrated with social, cultural and economic values. This document is a major contribution to that vision. It arises from the new agenda of biodiversity action planning, which is an attempt to redress the loss of habitats and their associated plants and animals.

Biodiversity - A Vital Part of London

As a World City with natural resources unparalleled in any other major conurbation, London is perfectly placed to take advantage of this agenda. The process began with the formation of the London Biodiversity Partnership and continues with the production of the London Biodiversity Action Plan. This strategic document addresses the concerns of landowners and land users, planners and politicians, businesses and local communities, who are beginning to recognise that biodiversity is a vital part of London life.

'By producing an Action Plan for Biodiversity, London is giving a lead to other World Cities - not only in making its own particular contribution to conservation of global diversity, but in demonstrating that nature is a vital ingredient in the quality of life of city dwellers.'

Our Green Capital

The 33 Greater London boroughs cover nearly 158,000 hectares (over 600 square miles). More than 40% of the total land area is green open space and nearly half of that is considered valuable as wildlife habitat.

Our capital contains a wide variety of wildlife habitats. Consider the range of woodland for example - from the famous ancient woodlands of Oxleas and Ruislip, which have existed for hundreds of years, to the small pockets of recent woodland in Victorian cemeteries and along railway lines. The diversity of other habitats includes the flower-rich chalk grasslands of the North Downs and the amenity grasslands of the central London parks; the reservoirs of the Lea Valley and the Thames Estuary; the wet meadows of the Ingrebourne Marshes in Havering and the dry, disturbed land of inner city 'wasteland'; the specially-created habitats of the Wetland Centre at Barnes and the often unexpected wildlife havens provided by private gardens. Furthermore, flowing through the very heart of the city is the River Thames, perhaps London's most valuable and well-known natural asset.

These habitats support a remarkable diversity of species. Most, like the hawfinch, bluebell and small blue butterfly, are remnants of native fauna and flora that survive in encapsulated fragments of semi-natural habitat. Other species like the robin and common blue damselfly have adapted well to the human environment of parks and gardens. Our capital also supports some species that are urban 'specialists'. One of our rarer birds, the black redstart, can be found on sparsely vegetated industrial areas such as old power stations, wharves and factory sites that mimic the scree-slopes and cliffs of their original natural habitat further south in Europe.

The legacy of London's trading history includes some plants that were accidentally or deliberately introduced. For example, the butterfly bush *Buddleia*, which originated in

China, is almost ubiquitous throughout London and contributes to maintaining our native wildlife. London rocket, which flowered profusely after the Great Fire of 1666, is now confined to a few sites in the centre of the city.

For most of us, it is the more common species which matter most: cormorants or herons fishing along the Thames; springtime carpets of bluebells or wood anemones; butterflies in the summertime meadows. The purpose of our action plan is to ensure that Londoners are able to experience nature in their local environment. After all, it will be the activities and aspirations of some seven million of us that will shape the future of biodiversity in the capital.

The Importance of Biodiversity

The impact of humanity on the global environment reached unprecedented levels during the 20th century and we are all now aware that biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate. There have been huge declines in many species in the UK. We have seen reductions of up to 85% in farmland bird populations over the past 25 years and even one of our most familiar birds, the song thrush, has declined by 52% in woodland and farmland during this period. Habitats have been affected as well - for example our flower-rich lowland meadows in Britain have nearly vanished, declining by 97% between 1934 and 1984.

Many of us are saddened by our impact on the environment and realise that unless we reverse current losses to biodiversity, the quality of life of future generations will suffer.

Why Conserve Biodiversity?

Unless we reverse current declines in biodiversity, future generations will inherit an impoverished world. We are dependent upon the global biological resource for survival. The air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat ultimately depend upon natural processes. Natural processes provide 'services' humans could not replace - flood control, for example. Genetic information from wild species provides an invaluable resource for food and medicine. Changes in species numbers and habitat quality can provide an indicator of environmental change, giving us early warning of harm or damage to the natural environment. Some would argue that we have a moral duty to avoid causing damage to habitats and the extinction of species which may have evolved over thousands or millions of years. Biodiversity is part of our natural heritage. It provides the backdrop to our everyday lives and contributes to our quality of life. Many people feel that the loss and degradation of biodiversity is an affront to their spiritual, aesthetic and emotional sensitivities.

An International Commitment

The London Biodiversity Action Plan is a direct result of the process initiated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Key environmental issues requiring international action were addressed and over 150 national governments, including the UK, signed the Convention on Biological Diversity as a commitment to helping avert the destruction of biodiversity.

The UK Government responded by publishing *Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan* in 1994 and establishing the UK Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, set up to implement

further action. As a stimulus to government, the voluntary nature conservation sector published *Biodiversity Challenge* in 1994, which outlined their agenda for action.

The *UK Steering Group Report* was published in 1995 and includes the first set of countrywide targets and action plans for habitats and species. Although the Report provides the national framework for biodiversity conservation, it also emphasises the importance of local action through Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

The New Agenda

London has long been a pioneering arena for urban nature conservation. For many years, voluntary and statutory nature conservation and environmental organisations, locally-based groups and individuals have argued successfully for the capital's wildlife. This has largely been achieved through the management of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and other open spaces. Protected areas such as nature reserves have been established, often in partnership with local authorities and private landowners, to safeguard wildlife and provide valuable areas for recreation, education and amenity.

The new agenda is an attempt to extend traditional nature conservation to involve a wider constituency. No longer is it simply the role of specialist agencies and voluntary wildlife bodies; this new biodiversity agenda provides an opportunity for many different people and organisations to contribute. It takes nature conservation beyond the protection and management of special sites, by emphasising the opportunities for action throughout the environment.

In the context of London, this wider landscape includes private gardens, amenity open space, sports pitches, farmland and some 'brownfield' sites that fall outside the identified nature conservation resource. These habitats often support considerable biodiversity. Significant proportions of song thrush, common frog and hedgehog populations, for instance, may depend on habitats provided by residential gardens. Railsides, waterways and reservoirs have immense value in their developing habitats and bodies such as London Underground, Railtrack and British Waterways have a significant role to play in developing the new biodiversity agenda.

Involvement of this wider range of bodies will be achieved through partnership and consensus, with responsibility being taken by a whole range of people and organisations able to deliver the ingredients of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

The Greater London Authority and London boroughs are responsible for the identification of London's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, which together form a hierarchy of three categories: Sites of Metropolitan, Borough and Local Importance. More than 1200 such sites have been identified in Greater London, covering an area of over 28,000 hectares. In addition, a network of Green Corridors extends from the Green Belt towards the centre of the city.

All London boroughs have planning policies that seek to prevent loss or damage to these sites. Some sites are afforded further protection by their status as Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation, Ramsar site,

National Nature Reserve or Local Nature Reserve, or because they are managed as a nature reserve by a nature conservation body, local authority or private landowner. Although the vast majority of important areas are now protected through local planning policies, some are still being lost as a result of new developments.

This well-established system will continue to provide a firm basis for biodiversity action in London. However, the Partnership is also working to enhance biodiversity within the fabric of the city - providing wildlife opportunities on buildings, roadsides, railway verges and other urban habitat.

Definitions

Biodiversity is the 'variety of life' - the myriad plant and animal species and the range of habitats in which they live. Biodiversity is all life on the planet, from the insects in the grass of an African savannah, to the ubiquitous and familiar birds which inhabit London's parks and open spaces; from the clusters of bacteria surrounding a geothermal vent at the bottom of the deepest ocean, to the frog finding refuge in a shallow garden pond.

Sustainable Development means integrating economic, social and environmental policies to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

***Local Biodiversity
Action Plans can
only be a success if
they are prepared
and implemented by
a partnership. This
ensures that all
organisations,
authorities and
individuals that
have the ability to
influence
biodiversity locally
are involved in the
process.***

The London Biodiversity Partnership

The partnership approach enables Biodiversity Action Plans to provide the biodiversity element of Local Agenda 21, another important theme from the Earth Summit.

The London Biodiversity Partnership was launched in 1996 with the publication of a framework document *Capital Assets: Conserving Biodiversity in London*. Terms of Reference defining the overall purpose of the Partnership were agreed, and a variety of over 30 public, private and voluntary sector bodies now make up membership of the core Partnership. A Project Officer facilitates the co-ordination of the London

Biodiversity Action Plan and maintains the London Biodiversity Partnership website (www.lbp.org.uk) through funding from partners and the Esmée Fairbairn Trust.

Already the collective efforts of members of the London Biodiversity Partnership have brought about marked benefits for the biodiversity of the capital. The London Wildlife Trust has published *Biodiversity Action Plans: Getting Involved at the Local Level* on behalf of the Partnership, which provides guidelines for local community and local authority involvement in the action planning process. The Greater London Authority, Lead of the House Sparrow Action Plan, worked with partners to complete the first ever public London Sparrow Survey 'Where have all our sparrows gone?' during the summer of 2002, the largest public wildlife survey in London to date, to address the issue of sparrow decline. A generic leaflet has been produced for pest controllers for the benefit of water voles through the London Wildlife Trust's Water Vole Working Group. The 'Chalking up London's Downs' project, made possible by the Partnership, continues to draw attention to the enjoyment opportunities provided by the habitat for communities in London. Many other success have also been seen across the Action Plans.

Many individual London boroughs have formed local partnerships to further local action and eight have published Biodiversity Action Plans. These borough partnerships are particularly important as they will help to identify how specific habitat and species action plans can be implemented on the ground and can also ensure that local aspirations and priorities are an integral part of the wider process.

The London Biodiversity Partnership · Terms of Reference

1. To establish an effective, committed and participatory partnership to conserve and enhance biodiversity in London
2. To identify broad aims and objectives to ensure biodiversity conservation in London
3. To ensure that national targets for species and habitats specified in the UK Action Plan are translated into effective action at the London level
4. To identify the information required to effectively conserve London's wildlife and act to remedy deficiencies
5. To develop targets and costed action plans for the conservation of habitats and species that are of international, national, regional or local importance, or are of special value to people living and working in London. The special circumstances that arise from London's urban character should be acknowledged
6. To promote access to and enjoyment of wildlife in London
7. To resolve conflicts between nature conservation and other interests
8. To promote public awareness and interest in the wildlife of London, raise the profile of nature conservation and encourage people's involvement and personal commitment to the implementation of action plans
9. To produce guidance to boroughs and other key organisations on the implementation of habitat and species action plans
10. To publish and review on a three year basis the London Biodiversity Action Plan and so establish priorities for action, incorporating a mechanism for monitoring and review.

The London Biodiversity Action Plan will be vital to the identification of priorities for London and delivery of action across the capital. It will also be a crucial framework for the development of local action through borough Biodiversity Action Plans.

A Plan of Action for London

If the UK action plan is to be implemented successfully, it requires some means of ensuring that the actions needed at the national level are undertaken in an integrated manner; and that national targets are translated into effective action at the local level. Local Biodiversity Action Plans are seen as a means by which such actions can be achieved. The Partnership recognises that biodiversity action planning is essentially a process rather than a product. Nevertheless, we consider it essential to develop a plan that will provide the mechanism for implementing the UK plan in London.

All Local Biodiversity Action Plans share the common overall goal identified by the UK Action Plan; namely to conserve biological diversity within the UK and contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms. The means by which the overall goal is achieved may differ from plan to plan as particular local circumstances may colour the overall objectives. The special circumstances that apply in London, particularly the sheer size and complexity of the conurbation, have resulted in a set of objectives designed to make the London action planning process inclusive. These objectives will help ensure that the conservation of biodiversity is pertinent to all decisions affecting the management and development of land in London. Therefore, all those with an influence over biodiversity will be encouraged to play a part in conserving it.

The first volume of the plan of action for London is the London Biodiversity Audit, a foundation document that describes the distribution of major habitats and species present in London. It contains fifteen habitat audits and four habitat statements and outlines the potential threats and opportunities for conservation. Audits for most of the major groups of species have also been produced, with much of the information supplied by the London Natural History Society.

The second volume consists of the Action Plans, each with realistic, carefully targeted actions for habitats and species that are considered priorities in London. It also contains Generic Action Plans for cross-cutting issues such as funding and communications. The process of turning audit into action has provided the opportunity for widening the Partnership and harnessing the expertise of new and established partners. These

organisations act as key contributors to individual Habitat or Species Action Plans and work collaboratively to realise their aims.

It follows that the London Biodiversity Action Plan can never be a static document - it will be in constant evolution. Audits and Action Plans need to be updated as new information becomes available. Regular monitoring and reviews are necessary to assess whether targets have been met.

The Action Plans published in Volume 2 have been produced in Rounds. Each Round of Action Plans is reviewed every three years - Round 1 review was completed in 2004.

Objectives of the London Biodiversity Action Plan

1. To conserve and enhance London's variety of habitats and species, in particular: habitats and species of international, national or London importance; habitats and species which are locally distinctive; habitats and species which have particular value as indicators or flagships; habitats and species that are sufficiently widespread to be appreciated by most Londoners
2. To ensure that the conservation of biodiversity is integral to the decision-making processes of all organisations with the ability to influence biodiversity conservation, particularly those with a direct influence over land management
3. To increase public awareness of, and involvement in, conserving biodiversity
4. To develop innovative methods for the effective conservation and interpretation of biodiversity in the urban environment

The London Biodiversity Audit

Habitat Audits: Woodland; Open Landscapes with Ancient/Old Trees; Acid Grassland; Chalk Grassland; Grassland, Meadows and Pasture; Heathland; Grazing Marsh and Floodplain Grassland; Marshland; Reedbed; The Tidal Thames; Canals; Ponds, Lakes and Reservoirs; Churchyards and Cemeteries; Railway Linesides; Farmland; Rivers and Streams

Habitat Statements: Private Gardens; Parks, Amenity Grasslands and City Squares; Urban Wasteland; Hedgerows

Species Audits: Vascular Plants; Birds; Butterflies; Macro-moths; Dragonflies; Other Invertebrates; Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibians

Sharing Ownership

The future success of the London Biodiversity Action Plan depends upon involving people in all aspects of the process. The presence of such a variety of green open spaces in London derives, in part, from people's need for easily accessible places to spend their free time - whether taking part in formal sports or relaxing and enjoying the natural environment. Enjoyment and appreciation of these open spaces is essential for promoting an understanding of the natural world, fostering a sense of ownership of the environment around us and reducing any unintended loss or damage to biodiversity. It appears that there is a lack of understanding of the importance of biodiversity in our lives, despite increasing awareness of the damage human activities cause globally. For an action plan to be effective, it must contribute to closing this gap in our learning experiences. Biodiversity education is therefore a key ingredient in an Action Plan, as it encourages individuals to become environmentally aware and skilled in taking

environmental decisions. Another vital aspect of biodiversity action planning is extensive public consultation, without which any action to conserve species and habitats may be poorly understood.

Biodiversity education enables people to:

- Understand what biodiversity means
- Understand that biodiversity is dynamic; that species and habitats are part of ecosystems that change naturally over time
- Know what factors influence biodiversity and understand that human activity can be both damaging and enhancing
- Be aware of biodiversity as part of our cultural heritage, integral to economic and spiritual well-being
- Recognise the relationship between biodiversity conservation and maintaining 'quality of life'
- Understand the significance of biodiversity conservation more fully and determine a personal level of commitment to it
- Understand ways in which individuals can make a positive contribution

The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy

The election of a Mayor for London on 4th May 2000 and the establishment of a new strategic authority (the Greater London Authority, or GLA) has provided new opportunities for nature conservation and sets a precedent for biodiversity action in other urban areas of the UK.

In 2003, the Mayor published his Biodiversity Strategy for London. . For the first time, it is necessary for all aspects of planning and development to take account of biodiversity conservation as a statutory obligation. The Mayor recognises that the Partnership is the key delivery mechanism for the Strategy, and he is committed to making it a success.

The Mayor's Strategies

- Air Quality
- Ambient Noise
- Biodiversity
- Culture
- Economic Development
- Energy
- Municipal Waste Management
- Spatial Development - the London Plan
- Transport

Investing in the Future of London

We need to integrate our activities with the requirements of the natural world in order to achieve sustainable development. In general, all work oriented to protecting and enhancing biodiversity is a key indicator of sustainability. However, over and above that principle the London Biodiversity Action Plan can encourage actions at a local level that contribute in turn to other aspects of sustainable development. These include the health and education of Londoners, promoting inward investment and alleviating the impact of the capital on other areas.

The Partnership recognises the crucial importance of working together for the future of London's biodiversity. London is world-renowned as a green capital and there now exists new opportunities for us to invest in it together.