

The Action Generic Action

Volume 2 of the London Biodiversity Action Plan

In addition to the specific action described in the individual Habitat and Species Action Plans, there are generic actions that lie across several plans. This section outlines these generic actions and should be read in conjunction with each plan.

The Generic Action section is not intended to be a complete summary of each issue. Rather, it provides a structure for strategic action and a guide to the major issues reader. Useful publications are listed under each section where relevant.

The Partnership has identified 7 generic issues:

1. **Site management**
2. **Habitat protection**
3. **Species protection**
4. **Ecological Monitoring**
5. **Biological records**
6. **Communications**
7. **Funding**

Important background guidance for several of these issues is the Government planning guidance on *Nature Conservation* ('PPG9'). In particular, this provides guidance on the protection on species and statutory and non-statutory wildlife sites. It also touches on habitat management and data issues and refers to the important role of English Nature in providing further advice in these areas.

Abbreviations used in this section:

EA – Environment Agency
EN – English Nature
GLA – Greater London Authority
GLC – Greater London Council
LA – Local Authorities

LBG – London Bat Group
LNHS – London Natural History Society
LWT – London Wildlife Trust
SINC – Site of Nature Conservation Importance

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1. Site Management

Much wildlife habitat requires management to retain and enhance its value and to enable people to enjoy nature. London's present biodiversity is a reflection of the good stewardship that has been undertaken by many organisations across the Capital.

However lack of or inappropriate, management is a significant factor in the declining nature conservation interest of many sites in London. There are several reasons why optimum nature conservation management may not be carried out. The most important of these are conflicting uses and differing perceptions of the role of the site. Where there is acceptance that nature conservation use is appropriate and desirable, lack of resources is often a major constraint to putting management into practice. Ignorance of suitable techniques may also be a contributory factor to a lack of effective management.

Site management falls into two broad categories - the physical management of the site and the management of the use of the site. Both aspects of site management should be addressed in order to increase biodiversity and people's enjoyment of it.

Objectives, Actions and Targets

Objective: To ensure that biodiversity conservation objectives are incorporated into plans, briefs, statements and other documents relating to the management of public open spaces in London.

Target 1: All Sites of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation in public ownership and management to have a management plan or management brief by 2003. All other SINCs by 2007.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Set up and maintain a database of SINCs ownership and management	From 2001	GLA	LA, LWT, EN, EA
Provide site-specific advice on strategic sites	From 2002		

Target 2: Establish that management of green public open spaces should, as best practice, incorporate biodiversity conservation objectives by 2010.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Convene a parks forum which meets at least twice a year	2001	GLA	LA, LWT, EN, EA BTCV
Produce and disseminate generic advice to parks managers on managing for biodiversity and its enjoyment in parks and open spaces, e.g. through publication of advisory material	2002		
Run training courses	2003		
Conduct a survey to assess whether the management of green open spaces incorporates biodiversity conservation objectives	2010		

2. Habitat Protection

Introduction

Habitat protection is obviously fundamental to making progress on the conservation of priority habitats. It is also fundamental to progress on the priority species, most of which go together with one or more of the priority habitats. For these reasons, there is a requirement for habitat protection in every action plan.

Most habitat protection is undertaken through the statutory planning system. There has been much work in London already to ensure that this system takes account of the requirements of biodiversity conservation and this section brings together the best practice from that experience.

Site protection

London Boroughs' Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) each have strategic policies. It is important that these make specific reference to the need to protect wildlife habitat as one component of sustainability.

The detailed protection of wildlife habitat in London is achieved largely through the protection of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Green Corridors and Countryside Conservation Areas, which have been identified through adopted procedures. The sites include all Local Nature Reserves and biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and hence National Nature Reserves, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation. The criteria for the selection of the sites include species issues, and the most important habitat of many species (including most priority Biodiversity Action Plan species) is protected effectively in this way. This advice on wildlife sites must be kept current, so that new findings and improvements do not remain unprotected.

Government planning guidance encourages the boroughs to protect wildlife sites in their UDPs. However, planning authorities have to balance biodiversity conservation with other material considerations and sometimes this can lead to some important habitat not receiving sufficient protection. Now that the London Mayor has adopted the procedures for identifying this land for his Biodiversity Strategy, it is appropriate to seek more comprehensive protection.

Habitat outside sites

Some wildlife habitat lies outside the series of wildlife sites, predominantly in the private gardens of suburbia. Many London Boroughs have planning policies that protect the better wildlife habitat in such blocks of residential properties. Such policies should be adopted across London and amended to refer to the gardens as a priority habitat for biodiversity.

Planning gain

When planning applications are considered, it is not only possible to refuse permission, but also to grant permission with conditions, or negotiated agreements. In this way it is possible to prevent losses to biodiversity and sometimes to obtain a net gain. Many London UDPs have policies indicating the intention to achieve such gains, sometimes specific gains to nature conservation.

These policies for planning gain should be updated to take account of measures beneficial to important species. Such species include those given statutory protection

as well as Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. It is not appropriate, however, to list all such species as there is no agreed definitive list and a list may be interpreted as all-inclusive.

Policies for habitat enhancement

Planning guidance encourages policies for the enhancement of wildlife habitats, but not all UDPs have such policies. It is important that plans include such policies, and update existing policies to refer to the need to consider the actions of Biodiversity Action Plans.

Other planning policy issues

Planning policies for uses other than biodiversity conservation can have an impact on wildlife habitat. For example, housing policies may appear to over-ride biodiversity considerations, or policies for the restoration of minerals workings may not refer to opportunities for the development of wetland habitat. It is important that such policies make appropriate provision for wildlife habitat, or explicit cross-reference to the nature conservation policies of the plan.

Access to wildlife habitat is an important planning issue in London. Such access can assist with habitat protection through an enhanced appreciation of the habitat amongst local communities.

Three other planning policy areas can sometimes aid biodiversity conservation, although their prime purpose is not habitat protection. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are a statutory mechanism for the protection of trees of amenity or landscape value. Some London UDPs have policies to protect or enhance specific features (commonly woodland, rivers or other water bodies). However, like TPOs, such policies usually focus on broader issues of amenity and landscape rather than on biodiversity conservation. 'Brownfield' habitats may be identified for use as temporary open space, but such use protects their wasteland habitats only where that temporary use is sympathetic. Similarly, much valuable habitat is within the Metropolitan Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land. While such specific policies can assist with biodiversity conservation and should refer to it, they are not a realistic alternative to the protection of the site series.

Other protection

Although the focus of this section is on the statutory planning system, the policies of other organisations can assist greatly with biodiversity conservation. Local Authorities, utilities, businesses and commerce control much land and can adopt their own habitat protection policies as a major contribution to biodiversity conservation.

Objectives, Actions and Targets

Objective: To ensure that planners, developers and others are fully aware of and responsive to their responsibilities to protect wildlife habitat.

Target: All Unitary Development Plans should have appropriate habitat protection policies by the end of the present round of reviews.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Advise on appropriate policy during UDP review process	Ongoing	EN	GLA, LA
Update London Ecology Unit guidance notes on planning policies for Unitary Development Plans	2001	GLA	EN, EA, LWT, LA

Further Reading

DETR (1996). *Planning Policy Guidance, Nature Conservation (PPG9)*. [To be revised in 2001]

DETR (revised March 2000). *Tree preservation orders; a guide to the law and good practice*.

Government Office for London (1994). *Regional Planning Guidance for London (RPG3)*. [To be replaced by the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy]

Government Office for London (1997). *Strategic Planning Guidance for the River Thames. (RPG3B)*. [To be replaced by the Mayor's Spatial Development Strategy]

London Ecology Unit (2000). *Policy, criteria and procedures for identifying nature conservation sites in London*. [Adopted by the Mayor of London as a basis for the London Biodiversity Strategy]

Relevant legislation

Convention on wetlands of international importance especially as waterfowl habitat (1971), as amended by the Protocol of 1982 and amended in 1987 (Ramsar Convention).

Council Directive on the conservation of wild birds (1979) (79/409/EEC, The Birds Directive).

Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (1992) (92/43/EEC, The Habitats Directive).

Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981), the provisions of which are extended and enlarged by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

3. Species Protection

Introduction

Individual plant and animal species do not exist in isolation from the habitats in which they live and are often dependent on a specific habitat. The best way of protecting species is therefore through habitat protection, and management of that habitat with regard to species' requirements. These issues are considered above.

However, species require their own protection to strengthen their conservation within the legal framework. Rare species that are vulnerable to extinction and may have a history of exploitation require special legislation. Not all valued habitat is protected by any means and, furthermore, mobile species can spend a good proportion of their lives between protected sites and wider habitats.

Background to the legislation

Part I of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act* (1981, as amended) is foremost among the various pieces of legislation protecting wild plants and animals in the UK. The Act also implements several international conventions and directives in this country (see 'relevant legislation', below). Whilst wildlife law enforcement is conducted by the Police, English Nature is the advisory authority for statutorily protected species and the first point of contact for enquiries.

All of London's wild birds, with the exception of traditionally hunted and pest species, are protected from killing and catching, being held in captivity, and the wilful destruction of their nests. Some uncommon species are also protected from disturbance at the nest whilst breeding. It is illegal to uproot any of London's wild plants without the landowner's permission and, in addition, a few nationally rare species may not be picked or sold.

Several of London's mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates are protected to various degrees. The fullest protection prevents killing and catching; possession and trade; damage to their places of shelter and disturbance during occupation of such places. Partial protection might solely prevent killing, injuring and trade; or only damage to places of shelter and disturbance, or in some cases simply trade.

Although the *Protection of Badgers Act* is primarily intended as a welfare law, it effectively makes the badger a fully protected species. Moreover, all species of wild mammals are protected from cruel mistreatment by the *Wild Mammals (protection) Act*.

London's specially protected species

Birds that are specially protected whilst breeding include kingfisher, hobby, barn owl, little ringed plover and black redstart. London's more irregular breeders include peregrine falcon, marsh warbler, Cetti's warbler, firecrest, bearded tit, avocet and woodlark.

Fully protected animals other than birds include all bat species, common dormouse, great crested newt and badger. Partially protected species include the water vole (its burrows, immediate habitat and disturbance of the animal whilst in occupation only); common lizard, slow-worm, grass snake and adder (intentional killing, injuring and trade only); common frog, common toad, smooth and palmate newts, chalkhill blue,

small blue, purple emperor, brown hairstreak, white-letter hairstreak and stag beetle (trade only).

Specially protected plants include greater yellow-rattle, Deptford pink and early gentian. The bluebell is protected from trade only.

Protected Species in Planning

Planning guidance specifically states that the presence of protected species and their habitat may be a material planning consideration in development control (PPG9 paragraph 47, DOE 1994). This includes a great many plants and animals, as we have seen that a wide variety of species are afforded some degree of legal protection through legislation. PPG9 also encourages London planning authorities to include specific policies for protected species in their Unitary Development Plans.

Species identified as a priority for the national, London, or individual borough action plans may not necessarily be afforded statutory protection (for example most invertebrates). It is appropriate therefore, to bring these priority species under the same protection in planning as those with legal protection. The revision of PPG9 should assist this.

Objectives, Actions, Targets

Objective: To ensure that planners, developers and others are fully aware of and responsive to their responsibilities in respect of protected species.

Target 1: All Unitary Development Plans to have an appropriate species protection policy by end of the current round of UDP reviews. Such policies should go beyond the minimum requirements of the legislation to reflect good practice in the conservation of important species.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Advise on appropriate policy during UDP review process	Ongoing	EN	GLA, LA.

Target 2: Provide further guidance notes on key species or species groups by 2005

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Produce series of guidance notes tailored to key audiences	2005	EN	LWT, GLA, LBG, LNHS, other specialist groups.

Further Reading

DoE (1994). *Planning and Policy Guidance: Nature Conservation* (PPG9), HMSO.

English Nature (1998). *Species Conservation Handbook*.

Waite, M J (1999). *Protected Species in London*. London Ecology Unit.

Relevant legislation

Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)

Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations (1994) (HMSO)

Deer Act, (1991)

European Union Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora, (1992)

European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, (1979)

Protection of Badgers Act, (1992) (HMSO)

Wild Mammals (protection) Act, (1996)

Wildlife and Countryside Act, (1981) (and amendments) HMSO

4. Ecological Monitoring

Introduction

It is important that progress in conserving London's biodiversity should be monitored. This is not only to inform the review and refinement of the individual action plans and actions, but also to measure whether or not the action plans are delivering improvements in our quality of life.

There is national advice on biodiversity indicators for sustainable development and quality of life. Locally, the London Planning Advisory Committee collated indicators for the State of the Environment Report, and many Local Agenda 21 partnerships have suggested indicators. Much of this work was reviewed by the London Ecology Unit in 1996, and that report should be consulted for a fuller account of the subject.

The London Biodiversity Action Plan is designed to include all the most important wildlife habitat and most individual species are covered through these habitat plans, rather than through individual species plans. Wildlife habitat is, by definition, indicative of biodiversity in general. The first priority, therefore, is the monitoring of wildlife habitat.

Habitat survey

The best way to monitor most habitat is through comprehensive ground survey of the habitats, as was undertaken by the GLC in 1984/85 and in re-survey of many individual London Boroughs since then. When areas are re-surveyed, the results provide a detailed account of losses and gains. However, such work is expensive and time-consuming, and is likely to be undertaken on a rolling programme, in which each area is revisited at intervals of several years. Some habitats, such as gardens, cannot be surveyed in this way, but can be done by involving members of the public.

Wildlife sites Changes in the number and area of Sites of Importance for nature conservation form one of the indicators in the State of the Environment Report. Without systematic re-survey, however, this indicator is biased – losses are more readily detected than the gains. To help avoid difficulties, this indicator should be compiled by an expert group.

Priority and opportunity habitat If resources for habitat survey are limited, priority may be given to the irreplaceable habitats, described by English Nature as 'critical natural capital'. In London, the priority would be to monitor Sites of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation. Where habitats are already monitored by a statutory agency there is an opportunity to develop an indicator at little extra cost. The prime example of this is the river water quality monitoring undertaken by the Environment Agency.

Trees A special case is the monitoring of trees that is undertaken by some London Boroughs, and the possible repetition of the 'Task Force Trees' study of the early 90s. Unfortunately these data do not provide a complete, unbiased inventory of trees and so they cannot be recommended as an indicator of wildlife habitat.

Monitoring the direct effect of the actions

It is considerably easier to monitor the state of the habitat, or of particular target species, in the places where actions have been undertaken. This is useful for measuring whether or not the actions are locally effective, and so is a desirable detail of biodiversity action.

Monitoring species groups for surveillance A group of species can be studied with an efficient census. Changes in numbers or abundance of particular species draw our attention to the need to check what is going on.

Such surveillance is best done through organising the efforts of interested individuals. There is a spectrum of methods ranging from widespread public participatory schemes, like the garden wildlife monitoring undertaken by London Wildlife Trust with postcards and on their website. Another such scheme might be based upon amphibians in London's garden ponds. At the other end of the spectrum are schemes like the Breeding Birds Survey, butterfly transects, Wetland Bird Survey and the 'Standard Walk' being piloted in London; schemes designed for use by dedicated amateur naturalists. Surveillance schemes are a cost-effective way of monitoring.

Atlas work The repetition of work for distribution atlases documents large scale and long-term changes in species distribution. The method is unsuitable, however, for smaller changes in abundance and changes occurring between the repetitions of atlas studies.

Monitoring schemes for individual species Some individual species are suitable subjects for monitoring. The traditional methods for this again involve trained amateurs undertaking standardised methods. London examples include the long-running heronries survey and the pilot pipistrelle bat survey. Care is needed, however, that multiplication of such single species efforts does not dissipate the resources of London's trained amateurs and detract from the priority for surveillance.

Individual and inadvertent monitoring Biological recording schemes collect data for reasons other than monitoring, indication or surveillance (see the section on biological records). Much of this information is difficult to employ for monitoring, because the essential requirement, that the effort can be repeated with confidence at some later date, is not met. There are exceptions to this, however, most of which are for species that are readily found if present and are popular with recorders (generally the rarer species in popular groups like birds, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, bats and higher plants).

Participation Participation in monitoring schemes is an excellent way of involving the public in the action plan process. This participation can be organised so that the results provide a repeatable measure, as in the advice above. Surveys can be designed purely to educate and raise awareness; these should not be sold as monitoring.

Objectives, Actions, Targets

Objective: To employ, encourage, develop and maintain long-term monitoring schemes for London's wildlife habitats and species, to indicate the state of London's biodiversity and monitor progress on the individual action plans

Target: Begin implementing various monitoring schemes and methods by 2002

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Institute programme of habitat survey to update whole of London on 10 year rolling programme	2001	GLA	LA
Begin monitoring integrity of Sites of Metropolitan Importance on a 3 year rolling programme	2002	GLA	LA
Develop methods to monitor the outcomes of the action in each action plan by 2001. Institute such monitoring where practicable	2002	GLA	Action Plan Lead Partners
Review information available from national monitoring schemes to develop London monitoring and recommend enhancements to the London coverage	2002	GLA	specialists
Develop new London monitoring schemes starting with birds and butterflies	2002	GLA	LNHS, BTO and specialists.
Develop and enhance schemes to produce baseline statistics through public participation and continue as a monitoring scheme	2002	LWT	GLA, LA
Research potential for the use of biological recording in monitoring selected species and develop into monitoring schemes	2002	LNHS	LA

References

- Cannon, A. 1998. *Garden Birdwatch Handbook*. British Trust for Ornithology.
- Countryside Commission (1993). *Action for London's trees* (CCP 433).
- Dawson, DG (1999). *London bird survey – instructions for participants. Standard walk, pilot study 1999-2000*. London Ecology Unit & London Biodiversity Partnership.
- English Nature (1994). *Planning for environmental sustainability*.
- Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (1991). *Butterfly monitoring scheme. Instructions for independent recorders*.
- London Bat Group (2000). *London pipistrelle bat survey. Standard walk pilot study (2000)*.
- London Ecology Unit (1996). *Indicators of biodiversity for London Boroughs*.
- London Planning Advisory Committee (1995 and subsequent revisions). *State of the environment report for London*.
- Noble, DG, Bashford, RI & Baillie, SR (2000). The breeding bird survey 1999. *BTO Research Report 247*.

5. Biological Records

Biological records (information on the location, distribution and extent of habitats and species populations) are essential data underpinning the decision-making process for biodiversity conservation. Accessible, up-to-date and credible biological records allow informed decisions to be made about the biodiversity conservation interest of a site or area and how this is best conserved or enhanced.

A wealth of biological information currently exists, but much of it is difficult to obtain because the information is often held in various formats in disparate locations. Rapid advancements in data-handling technology provide opportunities for a more unified approach to the collation and dissemination of biological information.

The National Biodiversity Network is a national project that is currently developing procedures and protocols to enable the establishment of a network of linked biological records centres. This will facilitate access to and exchange of compatible data.

Objectives, Actions and Targets

Objective: To establish a biological records centre for London to collate and disseminate a wide-range of biological information, linked to the National Biodiversity Network.

Target: To have a biological records centre set up and providing a service to key partners and external customers by 2006

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Produce a biological records centre development plan	2002	EN	LWT, LNHS, LA, GLA, EA
Establish records centre	2006	EN, LWT, LNHS, LA, GLA, EA	

Further reading

National Biodiversity Network website: www.nbn.org.uk

6. Communications

Greater London is home to some 7 million people and is one of the most diverse cities in the world. Effective communication with Londoners is essential to the success of the London Biodiversity Action Plan. Apart from raising awareness, we must secure an understanding of the issues involved and provide opportunities for all people to become actively involved in action.

There is currently a great deal of activity to educate and involve the public in nature conservation in London, carried out by Local Authorities, Government agencies and a wealth of voluntary bodies and local volunteer groups. These activities include guided walks, open days, themed events, environmental education activities with the formal education sector and practical workdays. Some of these events, when well publicised, are extremely popular with the public. However, there is concern that the people attracted to environmental events do not fully represent all of London's society – and that some areas of London are better served than others.

There is a wealth of experience and expertise in London and across the UK in the field of communicating biodiversity issues to the public. The Partnership recognises the need to tap into this resource and develop new and innovative mechanisms to ensure that all Londoners have a real opportunity to experience, understand and participate in biodiversity conservation and the Biodiversity Action Plans.

The Communications Topic Group is the Partnership's sub group for issues of education, marketing, media and involvement. New partners are welcomed.

Objectives, Actions and Targets

Objective: To produce a communications strategy to set out how the Partnership can encourage a greater understanding of biodiversity conservation and involve a wider audience in the delivery of the action plans.

Target: Communications Strategy produced and agreed by early 2001

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Produce guidance to ensure effective promotion of action as part of the London Biodiversity Action Plan	2001		Communications Topic Group
Identify additional communication actions for each habitat and species action plan that can be implemented under the umbrella of the London Biodiversity Partnership	2001		
Produce Communications Strategy	2001		

7. Funding

The London biodiversity action planning process, whilst ambitious and aspirational, should be based on the achievable. Although much can be done to implement biodiversity action by working within existing and shared resources, there is no doubt that many individual actions will require additional, external funding.

Funding sources may include programmes for environmental improvement that are already established in London. For example, there are various schemes based on environmental improvements through good agricultural practice which can deliver biodiversity benefits. However, there may be the need for some of these programmes to give greater weight to urban habitats in order to be applicable to a wider range of action.

Many infrastructure and regeneration initiatives take place in London and in general, these have yet to recognise the links between biodiversity conservation and securing sustainable communities. The London Biodiversity Action Plan needs to be taken into account in these initiatives and resources should be devoted to the programme of action identified by the Partnership.

A strategy is required to set out a framework that prioritises actions that need external funding. This strategy should propose ways of increasing funding availability through current and new agencies, as well as sponsorship and partnership. It will require regular review as new sources of funding become available and new actions plans are produced.

The Partnership expects that this strategic approach will help to enable projects in many parts of London, thereby also increasing the resources available to local biodiversity partnerships.

Objectives, Actions and Targets

Objective: To develop a strategy which investigates possible sources of funding for the Action Plans, identifies and prioritises actions that require external funding and makes proposals for increasing funding availability.

Target: Funding Strategy produced and guiding applications by 2001

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
Assess the costs of individual actions within the action plans where appropriate to securing additional funding	2001	GLA	EN, EA, LWT, LA, BTCV
Compile information on current funding available and develop a funding strategy	2001		