



BIODIVERSITY ACTION FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is the whole variety of life on Earth, all species of plants and animals, their genetic variation and the habitats they are part of. It includes not just the rare or the threatened but also the wildlife that is familiar to us in the places where we live and work.

Why does Biodiversity Matter?

Without biodiversity we could not survive. The loss of too much habitat and too many species would threaten the functioning of our natural environment. Biodiversity supports our lives by regulating the chemical composition of the atmosphere, soil, lakes, oceans and it can also moderate the climate. Biodiversity provides the food we eat and can improve the quality and quantity of the water we drink. It supplies us with medicines, clothes, fuel and building materials.

Biodiversity as vegetation can assist us in defending our land, homes and businesses from floods and erosion. Biodiversity can also help to protect us from nutrient, dust and noise pollution by natural processes. Animals, fungi and bacteria help to break down some of our waste and create productive soils. Biodiversity provides a better living environment with health, recreational and inspirational benefits. It is an important part of the tourism industry and contributes to a sense of place. It forms the natural landscapes of mountains, woodlands, wetlands and coastlines that we value so much. Biodiversity is appreciated by many people as is shown by the large numbers that belong to or work for nature conservation organisations, record species, follow nature trails or just enjoy wildlife programmes.

Biodiversity in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire is a highly diverse county ranging from the Wye Valley with its ancient ravine woodlands in the west, to the streams of the Cotswold plateau in the east. The county fits into three key Natural Areas. These are the acid grasslands, bogs, heaths and ancient woodlands in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley; the Severn Vale and its floodplain habitats which are important for bird-life, especially wintering wildfowl and breeding waders; and the Cotswolds with its limestone grasslands and beech woodlands.

A Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire

Habitats and species in Gloucestershire, as in much of the UK, have suffered dramatic declines in recent decades and many once common species are becoming increasingly rare. Some such as the water vole are on the verge of extinction. This has happened mainly by loss and damage to habitats from agricultural intensification, development and pollution. Species have been directly affected by the introduction of non-native species, disturbance and over-exploitation.

As a direct result of the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Earth Summit in 1992 the Government has drawn up a national strategy to conserve our threatened native species and habitats - the **UK Biodiversity Action Plan** (HMSO, 1994). At the county level a **Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire** has been produced and was launched on the 5th April 2000 at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust Centre, Slimbridge. The aim of the Plan is to achieve a county richer in wildlife. The Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire covers both local and national concerns and contributes to an international process.

In total, around 60 organisations in the county are now actively involved and together form the **Gloucestershire Biodiversity Partnership**. A Gloucestershire Biodiversity Project has been established to implement Biodiversity Plan priorities. It is overseen by a group of key partners including English Nature, the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Local Authorities. The whole biodiversity initiative depends upon everyone. We all have an impact on wildlife from environmental organisations, local government, farmers and landowners to businesses, schools and communities.

Action Plans for Habitat and Species

The Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire contains a series of **Habitat Action Plans** and **Species Action Plans**. These take into account national priorities using the knowledge of local experts to devise what action we need to take 'on the ground' to conserve and enhance

biodiversity. Gloucestershire holds, for example, nationally important bat populations, areas of limestone grassland and many significant types of woodland. The Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire also takes into account locally important species (such as brown hare, song thrush and arable wildflowers) and habitats (such as old orchards, urban habitats, rivers and streams).

The Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire includes Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans as follows:

HABITAT ACTION PLANS

1. Estuaries, Saltmarsh and Mudflats
2. Rivers and Streams
3. Canals
4. Reedbeds
5. Standing Open Waters
6. Lowland Wet Grassland
7. Unimproved Neutral Grassland
8. Unimproved Limestone Grassland
9. Cereal Field Margins
10. Species Rich and/or Ancient Hedgerows
11. Woodlands
12. Woodpasture, Parkland and Veteran Trees
13. Lowland Heathland
14. Acid Grassland
15. Limestone Pavement
16. Urban Habitat
17. Old Orchards

SPECIES ACTION PLANS

VERTEBRATES

1. Great Crested Newt
2. Farmland birds (skylark, linnet, reed bunting, corn bunting, tree sparrow, grey partridge, bullfinch, turtle dove, song thrush)
3. Bittern
4. Nightjar
5. Woodlark
6. Spotted flycatcher
7. Allis and Twaite shad (fish)
8. Water vole
9. Brown hare
10. European otter
11. Dormouse
12. Bats (barbastelle, bechstein's bat, pipistrelle, greater horseshoe bat, lesser horseshoe bat)

INVERTEBRATES

1. Ants and bees (various)
2. Beetles (various)
3. Stag beetle
4. High brown fritillary butterfly
5. Pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly
6. Marsh fritillary butterfly
7. Flies (various)
8. Moths (various)
9. White clawed crayfish
10. A snail *Lauria sempronii*
11. Freshwater mussels

PLANTS, FUNGI AND LICHENS

1. Devil's bolete
2. A wax cap *Hygrocybe calyptriformis*
3. A lichen *Bacidia incompta*
4. Round-leaved feather moss
5. Arable wildflowers (cornflower, red tipped cud-weed, red hemp-nettle, shepherd's needle, spreading hedge parsley, broad-fruited corn salad)
6. Tower mustard
7. Prickly sedge
8. True fox-sedge
9. Early gentian
10. Juniper
11. Perfoliate pennycress
12. Lesser bearded stonewort
13. Starry stonewort
14. Tassel stonewort
15. Great tassel stonewort

The Plan sets objectives and targets and lists the actions required to achieve them in order to guide nature conservation over the coming years. Since Gloucestershire has such a rich natural environment, holding many species and habitats of national and international importance, Gloucestershire's Biodiversity Action Plan is a vital part of the national strategy.

How can I help to protect Gloucestershire's Biodiversity?

As an **INDIVIDUAL**:

Become a member and/or a volunteer for one of Gloucestershire's conservation charities such as Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society, RSPB, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust or the BTCV. Look after your garden in a wildlife friendly way. Aim to make your lifestyle more "sustainable" by for example, recycling, saving energy and trying to use the car a bit less so that you reduce your impact on the environment. When buying your food keep an eye out for locally farmed produce, especially if it has been produced in an environmentally friendly manner. Send the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) or Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust records of interesting species such as the Stag Beetle or any of the Priority species listed in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire.

As a **COMMUNITY**:

Get together with your community to learn and understand the biodiversity present around you. Where it is needed carry out local surveys of habitats and species and pass the information collected on to the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) or the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. This will help to identify the biodiversity in your parish and can be a focus to encouraging work that benefits wildlife where you live.

As a **FARMER** or **LANDOWNER**:

The main thing to do is to identify the wildlife features on your land and to look after and enhance these wherever possible. Consider entering your farm into an agri-environment scheme such as the new Environmental Stewardship Scheme. Contact the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) for farm or land conservation advice.

As a **BUSINESS**:

Wherever possible, through management, maximise the value of your landholding for wildlife. Try to make your work practices as Environmentally Sustainable as possible. Contribute funds to conservation projects for example by becoming a sponsor for a priority species or habitat. Visit the "Business and Biodiversity" website at www.businessandbiodiversity.org/ or contact the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (Tel 01452 383333) for further information and advice.

As an **ORGANISATION**:

Your organisation could be in a good position to champion the conservation of individual species or habitats. As with a business try to make your work practices as Environmentally Sustainable as possible. Increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity amongst your staff and pass this on to others. If your organisation wants to do more join the Gloucestershire Biodiversity Partnership.

For further information about the Biodiversity Action Plan for Gloucestershire please visit the website at www.gloucestershirebap.org.uk/ . Alternatively contact the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (Tel. 01452 383333), Gloucestershire County Council (Tel. 01452 425679) or your local district, borough or city council.