

Countdown 2010

NATURAL
ENGLAND

A group of approximately 15 children and two adults are gathered in a grassy field, holding up a large, multi-colored parachute. The parachute is divided into sections of red, yellow, green, and blue. The children are dressed in casual summer clothing, and the adults are wearing t-shirts and trousers. The background shows a wooden fence and a line of trees under a clear sky.

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

Project achievements in 2006/2007

- **Protecting the best sites;** an extra **16** sites in Cumbria and **17** sites in Staffordshire have been identified and designated as County Wildlife sites. In Oxfordshire, **14** target areas have been identified as priority areas for conservation work through stewardship options, and over **600 ha** of priority habitat in the Mendip Hills has been given restoration advice. In Cumbria, **6** important breeding sites for natterjack toads have been improved along their current coastal stronghold.
- **Action for threatened habitats;** **100 ha** of heathland, **450 ha** of grassland, **125 km** of hedgerow and **500 ha** of woodland have been restored, recreated or brought into favourable management by Countdown 2010 projects across England. Restoration plans have been produced for **5** important mossland sites in Lancashire and **12** ponds in the Stroud valley have been restored.
- **Action for threatened species;** **1,029** male black grouse in northern England were counted attending leks in 2006, exceeding the UK BAP target for this species. More than **20** re-introduced ciril buntings have survived over winter in Cornwall and **8** pairs have so far bred, with the first chicks spotted in June 2007. In Devon, **4** rare fanshells have been found in the Salcombe Estuary and awareness of their presence has been raised among the local boat owning community.

- **Engaging people;** volunteers are extremely valuable to most of our projects. They have given over **80,000** days of their time during the first year of the scheme to undertake surveys, check livestock, learn new skills and work on the ground to maintain important areas for biodiversity. Over **100** schools have taken part in a range of environmental activities including roadshows, preparing biodiversity action plans, habitat creation and practical events.
- **Developing the evidence base;** **2,200** basking shark sightings were recorded in 2006, doubling the number recorded in 2005, with 'hot spots' in the South West, the Isle of Man and Scotland. The third Great Stag Hunt recorded **4,500** stag beetle sightings. All 34 Countdown 2010 projects are now reporting on **BARS** (Biodiversity Action Reporting System).
- **Influencing policy and decision making;** several Countdown 2010 projects have been working hard to influence the forthcoming **Marine Bill** through representation at Government meetings. The importance of **brownfield** sites for priority invertebrate species has been brought to the attention of planning departments in the Thames gateway and across the Midlands highlighting how conservationists can work with developers to protect these valuable sites. Also, an **ecological network** approach is being developed with several local authorities in Suffolk and Sussex to influence county and district strategies.

Engaging people

Promoting biodiversity action in Sussex

One of the outcomes of this project run by the Sussex Wildlife Trust is to enhance biodiversity in school grounds. The project has employed a project officer to undertake this task in the Brighton and Hove area, where school grounds cover 161 square hectares – 15% of the city's green space.

As part of this project, a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) manifesto for schools has been drawn up. The manifesto includes identifying a teacher responsible for conservation, preparing a school BAP, ensuring children are actively involved, and managing a wildlife area within the school grounds.

So far, 15 schools have signed up to the manifesto. The project officer has helped in the setting up of environmental clubs at several of these schools, as well as making preparations for major habitat projects such as planting orchards and creating ponds.

Sussex Wildlife Trust



The project has also been promoting education and public understanding by running a range of wildlife courses. These include learning surveying techniques, nature photography, woodland skills and introductions to a variety of species and habitats. The courses have been well received and have been taken up by a wide cross-section of the community.

Environments for All

The Environments for All programme was set up by the BTCV to generate large-scale public involvement in biodiversity conservation by working in partnership with organisations that own and manage land. Through the programme, the BTCV aims to engage with disadvantaged and marginalised communities, as well as introducing young people to conservation.

As part of this programme, the Spring into Action campaign was run in May 2006 involving more than 13,000 people in over 700 volunteering events across the UK. This event was repeated in May 2007 with even greater success, providing hands-on opportunities for people to get involved in looking after their local wildlife and greenspaces.

Conservation volunteering and community environmental projects were run on over 1,800 sites in the first project year, engaging more than 35,500



BTCV

volunteers. Volunteer survey information collected at these events suggests that 17% of volunteers involved with the programme are from ethnic and minority communities. Statistics also show that the programme is helping to bring young people into contact with the natural environment, 23% of the volunteers being under the age of 25.

Severn Vale Biodiversity Partnership

The Stroud Valleys Project is engaging with local communities within the Severn Vale area of Gloucestershire through a range of events and habitat workshops. In the first year of the project over 600 volunteers took part in activities such as making access improvements to walking trails, hedge laying, building bird boxes and undertaking land use surveys.

The project is working with five primary schools in the area creating practical educational workshops linked to the National Curriculum. One school runs a programme of environmental activities for its children during 'Golden Time', their weekly half-hour reward time. The number of children choosing these activities has risen and they are showing genuine enthusiasm for the natural environment.

Stroud Valleys Project



Students with special needs and learning difficulties have undertaken nine half-day habitat workshops including bird box making, hedge planting and habitat management tasks. The project is also engaging people with mental health problems and local disabled residents to increase their opportunities to access the countryside.

Protecting species

Cirl bunting re-introduction

The cirl bunting is a small farmland bird whose population in the UK plummeted during the 1980s due to agricultural intensification. With the help of Devon farmers, a species recovery programme successfully increased the remaining population in South Devon. The RSPB, in partnership with Paignton Zoo, Natural England and the National Trust, are now working to increase the range of this species.

During the summer of 2006, 72 cirl bunting chicks were successfully hand-reared to release stage. The chicks were collected under licence from agreed donor sites in Devon for rearing and release in Cornwall. The birds were ringed and monitored by the RSPB and volunteers over the winter. More than 20 birds survived the winter and in June a pair of cirl buntings were seen nesting in a farmer's back garden, the first confirmed breeding in Cornwall for more than 10 years. Despite the awful weather, there were at least 11 breeding attempts from 7 pairs in 2007.

RSPB



A number of fledged young have been seen and it is hoped some of these birds will go on to breed next year, along with the newly released birds taken from Devon this year.

Over 20 landowners and farmers have engaged with the project so far, and more than 10 ha of wild bird seed mixes/spring barley have been secured for 2007. The wild bird seed mixes of quinoa and millet, along with weedy spring barley stubbles, will be an essential food source for the birds during the winter.

Conserving butterflies and moths at a landscape level

This project run by Butterfly Conservation is concerned with 30 priority landscape areas across the Midlands and the East of England, in nine of these areas there is a particular focus on safeguarding important brownfield habitats. Threatened butterflies and moths have adapted to live on brownfield sites due to the variety of habitats that are found there. Nectar-rich flowers, tall and short vegetation, plus areas of bare ground all combine to form the mosaic landscapes that these species need.

A former colliery site in Nottinghamshire is being restored to limestone meadow with features that will favour the dingy skipper butterfly pictured. A south-facing bank of maerl and crushed limestone has been sown with bird's-foot-trefoil and a scattered hawthorn hedge will be planted to provide shelter.

Butterfly Conservation



Butterfly Conservation is also working in partnership with a large development company in Stoke-on-Trent. Business parks being developed next to green railway corridors will include a buffer strip between the offices and the railway line to extend these important habitats. The land will be left to regenerate naturally without the addition of any top-soil.

The project also focuses on areas that support a number of UK Biodiversity Action Plan species and where biodiversity is generally high, for example the Malvern Hills and the Wyre Forest.

Bringing back the natterjack

Natterjack toads have suffered massive declines in recent decades and just 47 populations now remain in England. Of these, 23 occur along the Cumbrian coast in increasingly isolated pockets. The Herpetological Conservation Trust has employed a project officer to develop a strategy for natterjacks to safeguard this species in Cumbria.

Habitat management work is being carried out at a number of important sites along the coast to improve conditions and halt species decline. Volunteers have been trained to monitor breeding populations in order to collect data on numbers of calling males, numbers of spawn strings and toadlet emergence. A programme of guided walks has also been undertaken, attracting over 200 people.

Jim Foster



This project is also working with landowners and farmers to secure connectivity between isolated natterjack populations. This is being achieved with the help of agri-environment scheme funding that facilitates appropriate habitat management for the species. Two landowners submitted applications for Higher Level Stewardship during the first year of the project.

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

