

Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan Glossary

This glossary defines the main terms used in the Biodiversity Action Plan, explaining specialist technical and policy terms used. A separate listing of abbreviations and acronyms is also included.

Agenda 21

An Action Plan for the 21st century endorsed at the **Earth Summit**. Agenda 21 sets out how we can meet the needs of communities and individual people today, whilst improving the quality of life and safeguarding the environment for future generations.

agri-environment schemes

Schemes offering payments to farmers to promote farming that is compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment and sustaining wildlife within the countryside. This includes schemes such as **Countryside Stewardship** and **Environmentally Sensitive Areas**.

agrochemicals

Chemical substances used in agricultural production including fertilisers, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides.

alien species see **non-native species**

ancient woodland

Long-established woodland that has often consequently developed a rich plant and animal life. Ancient woodland is defined as that known to have existed in a specific location since before 1600.

anthropogenic

Produced by human activity.

baseline

A defined condition for a site, **habitat** or **species** against which future changes in the condition of the site, habitat or species can be **monitored**, and the significance of this change in conservation terms assessed.

baseline survey

A survey of a site and its constituent habitats or species to establish the **baseline** conditions.

biodiversity

The total variety of life on earth or any given part of it. The variety of genes, species and habitats within an area.

Biodiversity Area

Areas of the counties with distinctive wildlife and landscapes. The division of the counties into Biodiversity Areas will aid the implementation of the **Biodiversity Action Plan**.

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

A framework for achieving the **conservation** of **biodiversity** based on the targeting of resources towards protecting priority habitats and species. BAPs also provide a means for the involvement in conservation of a wide range of organisations including the participation of members of local communities. BAPs can be prepared at a range of levels: country-wide (eg the **UK Biodiversity Action Plan**), for counties (eg the Hertfordshire BAP) or for recognised areas (eg the National Forest BAP).

Biological Records Centre (Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre)

A centre based often at the county level for the collection, management, analysis and dissemination of information on wildlife and habitats within that area. Biological Records Centres will play an important role underpinning the **monitoring** of **local BAPs** and supporting the implementation and promotion of such local conservation initiatives.

biomass

The total quantity of living organisms in a given area, measured in terms of weight or energy content.

biosphere

The surface layer of the Earth where living organisms occur, comprising land, water and air.

Birds Directive

The abbreviated term for *Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the Conservation of Wild Birds*. This Directive aims to protect bird species within the European Union through the conservation of populations of threatened birds and the habitats used by these species.

bryophytes

A major group of plants that includes mosses and liverworts.

champion (of a species or habitat action plan)

An organisation, be they a business, community group, charity or government body, that undertakes to provide support for the implementation of an individual **Species** or **Habitat Action Plan** within a **Biodiversity Action Plan**.

Common Agricultural Policy

A European Community wide policy which supports agriculture through price support measures and market management and through measures to improve agricultural structures.

community

An identifiable and distinct grouping of organisms occurring together in a particular area that interacts with each other and with their shared **environment**.

consensus building

An approach to working on issues which builds common ground between all the parties or stakeholders involved.

conservation

The management of human use of the environment to sustain the diversity of wildlife occurring.

conservation objective

A stated aim for the level of protection for a habitat or species that is desirable in view of the aims of nature conservation. Objectives should be specific, measurable and realistic, hence they will often include **targets**.

convention

An international agreement through which nations agree to work together co-operatively to implement certain defined policies or take other action. International conventions are voluntarily entered into by countries, but once a country has signed a convention it agrees to be bound by its specified terms and conditions.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention was signed by the Prime Minister and 150 other Heads of State or Governments at the **Earth Summit** in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Under Article 6A of the Convention signatories must develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

coppicing

The traditional form of management of much of the broadleaved woodland in the UK. It involves cutting down trees and shrubs near ground level, allowing the tree to re-grow from the stump, and re-cutting at intervals of one or more decades to provide a harvest of long straight poles.

Countryside Stewardship

An **agri-environment scheme** through which farmers and landowners can receive payments for management agreements that result in the maintenance and enhancement of certain important landscapes and habitats including grassland, lowland heath, waterside land and hedgerows and field boundaries which need restoring. The scheme is administered by FRCA.

diversity

An assessment of the richness of different types in a location (which can be a large or small area) including the number of different habitats or numbers of different species.

Earth Summit

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June '92.

ecology

The study of the inter-relationships between living organisms and their environment.

ecosystem

A **community** of interdependent organisms and the **environment** they inhabit and interact with, such as ponds and pond life.

endemic species

A species of animal or plant found only in a particular area (usually taken to be a country or region).

environment

The external surroundings (ie physical and chemical conditions) experienced by and influencing species and habitats.

Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Assessment

A process of predicting and evaluating an action's impacts on the environment. It aims to minimise environmental degradation by giving decision-makers better information about the consequences which development actions could have on the environment. (See also **Strategic Environmental Assessment**).

Environmentally Sensitive Area

An **agri-environment scheme** run by **MAFF** designed to promote traditional farming practices to protect and enhance the environment. Farmers and other land managers can enter into 10 years agreements to manage their land in designated ways to maintain and restore particular landscapes and habitats.

eutrophic

[A habitat] having high productivity as a result of high levels of nutrients promoting the growth of certain species.

eutrophication

The over-enrichment of an aquatic habitat with inorganic nutrients, especially nitrates and phosphates, typically from sewage discharge or **agrochemical** run-off which may result in an imbalance of the normal **flora** and **fauna** associated with the area.

fauna

All animal life.

flora

All plant life.

flush

A patch of wet ground, usually on a hillside, where the water flows diffusely over and through the upper layers of soil and not in a fixed channel.

gene

The basic unit of inheritance of animals and plants.

habitat

A place in which a particular plant or animal lives. Often used in a wider sense, referring to major assemblages of plants and animals found together such as woodlands or grassland. The priority habitats for conservation in the counties are described and defined fully in the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Habitat Action Plan

A targeted programme of management measures aimed at maintaining/restoring a specific habitat. Habitat Action Plans identify **conservation objectives** and **targets** for the habitat in question and specify actions and responsibilities for achieving the objectives. Habitat Action Plans are developed for national priority habitats in the **UK Steering Group Report** and for counties in **local BAPs**.

habitat creation

Land management actions based on establishing a **habitat** on a site where it has not occurred before.

habitat re-creation (or habitat restoration)

Land management action based on restoring a **habitat** on a site where it has previously existed, but subsequently been lost.

Habitats Directive

The abbreviated term for *Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora*. This Directive promotes the conservation of certain key habitats and species within the European Union by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and populations of wild species.

Habitat Scheme

A scheme proposed by **MAFF** to create a range of wildlife habitats by taking land out of production for 20 years and managing it in an environmentally beneficial way.

hedgelaying

Planting or replanting a stretch of hedge. Hawthorn is the plant species most commonly laid, although a range of species can be planted (eg blackthorn, hazel or willow).

indicator species

An organism whose characteristics (eg presence or absence, population density, dispersion, reproductive success) are used as an index of attributes too difficult, inconvenient, or expensive to measure directly. Such characteristics may be used to indicate the degree of pollution or other environmental conditions at a particular locality.

intensive agriculture

A term generally used to signify the use of high input, high output crop and livestock husbandry systems in order to produce the optimum possible economic return from the available land. Intensive agriculture involves high usage of fertilisers, **agrochemicals** and mechanisation.

invertebrates

Animals without a backbone (insects, for example).

Lead Agency

An organisation, be they a business, community group, charity or government body, that undertakes to lead on the implementation of an individual **Species** or **Habitat Action Plan** within a **Biodiversity Action Plan**.

Local Agenda 21

Partnerships of local people, communities and organisations to achieve Agenda 21 at a local level.

local authority

A local government body, such as a County, District or Borough Council.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

A **Biodiversity Action Plan** prepared for a local area (usually a single county, grouping of counties, District or Borough). Government guidance recommends that local BAPs correspond to **local authority** boundaries.

Local Environment Agency Plan

A plan of action for the Environment Agency and its partners to tackle environmental issues relating to the water environment, air and waste disposal and more generally to the achievement of **sustainable development**. LEAPs identify and focus action on specific problems within defined river catchments.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

An area of land that is of special nature conservation interest locally. LNRs are declared and managed by local authorities under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

management

The manipulation of a site to maintain or enhance its habitats and population of a species, through recognised techniques such as **coppicing** or grazing.

management planning

The process of identifying the **management** requirements of a site and developing the appropriate management measures to satisfy these requirements. The document prepared as part of the management process is known as the management plan.

microhabitat

A small part of a habitat which has distinct physical conditions, a hollow in a mature tree for example.

monitoring

A process of repeated observations of one or more elements of the environment, such a population of species or **water quality**. Monitoring should follow a prearranged programme in space and time and use pre-set methods for data collection. Monitoring provides factual information concerning the present state and past trends in environmental parameters. Monitoring key habitats and species will allow the assessment of the success of the **Biodiversity Action Plan** in protecting **biodiversity**.

National Nature Reserve

A reserve declared under law and managed either by one of the statutory nature conservation agencies (English nature in England) or by an approved body.

nationally rare species

Species of very limited national occurrence and distribution. They are defined as those species known to occur in 15 or fewer of the 10 x 10 km Ordnance Survey grid squares that divide Great Britain.

nationally scarce species

Species of limited national occurrence and distribution. They are defined as those species known to occur in 16-100 of the 10 x 10 km Ordnance Survey grid squares that divide Great Britain.

native species

A species that occurs naturally in an area and, therefore, not having been introduced by humans, either accidentally or intentionally.

Natural Areas

A concept, introduced by English Nature, for defining areas based on their characteristic landscape and **fauna** and **flora** and resulting in the definition of 92 **terrestrial** and 24 coastal/maritime Natural Areas in England. These biogeographic zones reflect the geological foundation, the natural systems and processes and the wildlife in different parts of England, and provide a framework for setting **conservation objectives**.

natural range

The geographical distribution of a species or habitat in recent times but excluding any changes to that range as a result of human activities.

nature conservation see **conservation****niche**

The ecological resource occupied by a species in a **community** or **ecosystem**.

non-native species

A species which has become established in the wild in an area (most usually a country) in which it does not naturally occur. Non-native species are introduced into an area as a result of human activities/ intervention (whether deliberate or accidental). These species often have adverse effects on **native species** and habitats as a result of competition.

oligotrophic

[A habitat] having low primary productivity as a result of being low in nutrients.

Phase 1 (habitat survey)

A land survey to establish land-uses and, in particular, the location of important wildlife sites and habitats within a given area.

pollard

A tree which has been cut about two metres from the ground so as to produce a crop of branches suitable for fencing or firewood.

pollution

The introduction by man, directly or indirectly, of substances into the environment resulting in deleterious effects to wildlife, hazards to human health or hindrance to activities such as fishing and recreation.

population

All individuals of one species occupying a defined area and usually isolated to some degree from other similar groups of the same species.

precautionary principle

A principle underlying the concept of **sustainable development** which implies that prudent action be taken to protect the environment even in the absence of scientific certainty. Giving environmental well-being legitimate status in the development process and adopting best-practice techniques for environmental management are fundamental to this principle.

Ramsar Convention

An international **convention** originally agreed in Ramsar in 1975. It aims to stem the progressive encroachment loss of **wetlands** and promoting the wise use of wetland wildlife. It requires the designation of Wetlands of International Importance (also known as Ramsar sites).

Red Data Book species

A species listed in catalogues published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), national agencies or county-level organisations, listing species which are rare, endangered or vulnerable to extinction globally, nationally or within counties.

reintroduction

The release and establishment of a species by human agency to an area within its **natural range** but where it had become extinct in historical times.

ride

An open unmade track through a wood.

Rural Action

A scheme co-funded by English Nature, the Rural Development Commission and the Countryside Commission to help people living in the English countryside to care for their own environment by promoting a wide variety of local projects.

semi-natural habitats

A **habitat** modified to a limited extent by human activities, but still consisting of species naturally occurring in the area. The majority of important habitats remaining in the UK are considered to be semi-natural as opposed to natural.

set-aside

Normally arable land removed from agricultural production as a requirement for receiving agricultural support. Although set-aside is a measure purely to control excessive production, set-aside land potentially has significant spin-off benefits for wildlife.

short list species

The top priority species for conservation in the UK as identified in the **UK Steering Group Report**. This report also identifies a long list of species which are of a lesser, but still national, conservation priority.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

An area of land or water notified by a statutory conservation agency under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as being of national nature or geological conservation importance.

Special Area of Conservation

A site of European importance for wildlife designated under the **Habitats Directive** by the UK Government where the necessary **management** is applied for the maintenance or restoration of the habitats and/or species for which the site is designated.

Special Protection Area

A site of international importance for birds designated under the **Birds Directive** by the UK Government where appropriate steps are taken to protect the bird species for which the site is designated.

Species Action Plan

A conservation plan for a species based upon knowledge of its ecological and other requirements, which identifies the actions needed to stabilise and improve its status. Species Action Plans are developed for national priority species in the **UK Steering Group Report** and for counties in **local BAPs**.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The formalised, systematic and comprehensive process of evaluating the environmental impacts of a policy, plan or programme and its alternatives, including the preparation of a report on the evaluation and the use of the findings in publicly-accountable decision-making.

succession

Sequential development of plant or animal **communities** through time.

survey

An inventory of the attributes of a site, area or region, usually in terms of habitat and associated species and normally following a standardised procedure.

sustainability

Maintaining the environment's natural qualities and characteristics and its capacity to fulfil its full range of functions, including maintenance of **biodiversity**.

sustainable development

The use of resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The conservation of biodiversity is a key test of sustainable development. If an activity results in a net loss of biodiversity then it is unsustainable.

target (biodiversity target)

A quantified **conservation objective**. Targets state, for example, projected population numbers for species or areas for habitats. Setting such numerical targets provides a tight focus for what the **Biodiversity Action Plan** is aiming to achieve. Furthermore, it establishes a yardstick against which the achievements of the BAP can be measured.

terrestrial

Living on, or referring to, land.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan

A strategy produced in 1994 by the UK Government that provides the framework for fulfilling the UK's responsibilities towards the **Convention on Biological Diversity**.

UK Steering Group Report

The report following from the **UK BAP** in 1995 which establishes specific actions and responsibilities for achieving the UK BAP.

water quality

The nature of a body of water in terms of its physical characteristics, turbidity for instance, and its chemical characteristics, nutrient status or level of pollutants for example.

wetland

Any habitat that is characterised by the presence of flowing or standing water at some stage in the year. Wetlands can range from open water bodies such as lakes and ponds, to seasonally wet habitats such as carr woodland or lowland wet grassland.

Wildlife Site

A site not qualifying as of national importance for the wildlife it contains (ie a **SSSI**) but regarded to be of local importance for wildlife, its importance being merited in a parish, district, borough or county context.