

Restoring the Region's Wildlife

Regional Biodiversity Strategy for the West Midlands



Executive Summary

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The West Midlands Region contains a wide variety of wildlife and landscapes, adding greatly to its character and attractiveness. Habitats include woodlands and forest, the upland grassland and heathlands of the north and west, the built up areas, gardens and open spaces of the major urban areas and the broad river valleys of the south and east.

While there is much to celebrate regarding our biodiversity we also face some difficult challenges. The Region's plants and animals have suffered major declines in recent decades, and there are continuing pressures from changing land uses and more indirect factors such as climate change.

The Challenges

This Regional Biodiversity Strategy for the West Midlands aims to focus attention on the most important priorities for biodiversity in the Region, set out in five key challenges:

- * Maintaining and improving the condition of habitats, species and ecosystems
- * Developing an area based approach to restoring wildlife
- * Monitoring the condition of habitats, species and ecosystems
- * Re-connecting and integrating action for biodiversity with other environmental, social and economic activity
- * Coping with the impacts of climate change

Meeting and overcoming these challenges is vital to achieving the Strategy's overall aim of restoring the Region's wildlife. It requires a co-ordinated response from the Region involving all relevant sectors, and for biodiversity objectives to be embedded in the wider working of the Region. The success of the Strategy will ultimately be measured in our ability to safeguard existing wildlife and restore lost species and habitats.

The Importance of Biodiversity

Biodiversity has intrinsic worth but is equally important for the contribution it makes to people's quality of life. It provides aesthetic pleasure - hearing bird-song is uplifting and would be sorely missed if it were not there - and utilitarian benefits such as the provision of food and clean air and water.

Biodiversity also plays a vital role in underpinning some of our most important economic sectors. The tourism industry relies heavily on a high quality environment, rich in wildlife, to attract visitors and customers. The quality of the environment has also been shown to be a significant consideration for those deciding where to locate new businesses.

The Policy Context

International, national, regional and local legislation, conventions and obligations relate to the wildlife of the Region. These include protecting and conserving internationally and nationally designated sites, and meeting land-use planning and other legislative



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obligations. The regional tier in particular has a role to play in ensuring appropriate coverage of biodiversity in the three major strategies - the Regional Sustainable Development Framework, the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy, as well as in the range of other regional plans, programmes and strategies. At the local level it is important that appropriate connections are made between local biodiversity action plans, which set out priorities for local areas, and significant policy documents such as local development frameworks and community strategies.

Measuring Success

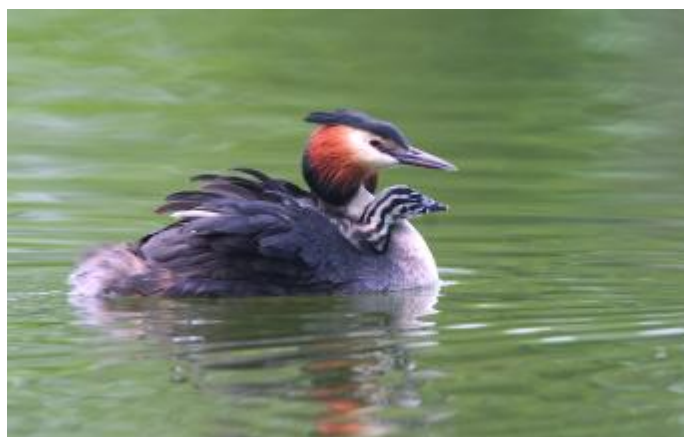
Meeting our key challenges is reliant on having high quality data easily available for monitoring trends, tracking progress towards biodiversity targets and improving the evidence base for effective policy-making. The need for ecological data is potentially vast, but resources for data collection and management are extremely limited. We need to secure resources in this area whilst prioritising our data needs and making careful use of indicators. A spatial understanding of biodiversity is also becoming increasingly important, for example to meet the requirements of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

A Sectoral Approach

Restoring the Region's wildlife requires action and cooperation from a wide variety of sectors across the Region. Whilst it may be perceived as a threat and a restraint on activity, biodiversity provides opportunities, for example in improving the quality of surroundings of business properties, providing a source of income by attracting visitors to wildlife rich areas, and helping to alleviate health and mental well-being problems. The Strategy describes the links with

biodiversity and suggests potential activities for the following sectors:

- * Agriculture
- * Water and Wetlands
- * Forestry and Woodlands
- * Towns, Cities and Development
- * Business
- * Tourism
- * Recreation and Access
- * Health
- * Transport



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Delivering the Strategy

The Strategy sets out the strategic direction for the next five years of biodiversity conservation in the West Midlands. It provides a broad framework through the five key challenges and their associated actions, to be delivered through a coordinated regional response led by the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership. A detailed Delivery Plan will be prepared and reports on the implementation of the Strategy and the Delivery Plan will be produced for the Regional Assembly and others on a regular basis.

Members of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership

Association of Local Government Ecologists

British Waterways

Butterfly Conservation

Country Land and Business Association

Countryside Agency

Defra

English Nature

Environment Agency

Forestry Commission

Government Office for the West Midlands

The National Trust

National Farmers Union

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Severn Trent Water Ltd

West Midland Bird Club

West Midlands Local Biodiversity Action Plan Coordinators' Group

West Midlands Local Government Association

West Midlands Regional Assembly

The West Midlands Wildlife Trusts

Woodland Trust

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