

Devon Aggregates & Biodiversity Project



Parish Biodiversity Audit

for

Burlescombe



- Report produced by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC) - the DBRC is operated by the Devon Wildlife Trust and supported by a partnership of Local Authorities, statutory and non-statutory nature conservation organisations.
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Burlescombe - Parish Plan Biodiversity Project

This document has been produced as a starting point to help community action for wildlife. By starting to bring together knowledge of the natural assets of the Parish, it may go some way to achieving its aim of contributing to - and stimulating ideas for - local action.

It should be emphasised that it is just a beginning. It does not represent a comprehensive account of the Parish and is based very largely on existing records held by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre. There will be a wealth of local knowledge that can be used to build upon and improve this report. Indeed, it is important that it is seen as a 'living document' and one that belongs to the Parish. It is hoped that it will be added to and refined by the people of Burlescombe Parish in future years.

Introduction

Burlescombe is a parish in Mid-Devon, located close to Devon-Somerset border about half way between Tiverton and Wellington. It is a rural parish with just two small villages: - Burlescombe and Westleigh. The parish is fairly level and low lying in the western two-thirds, the ground rising to the south and east of Burlescombe towards the edge of the Blackdown Hills.

The River Lyner flows in a north-south direction through the centre of the parish and its floodplain creates a large band of low lying, level ground here. To the west and east the ground rises, slightly to the west and quite dramatically to 150m or so in the east where it meets the Blackdown Hills.

The majority of the parish is used for intensive agriculture of arable and improved grassland. Some of the higher ground such as the area north of Burlescombe has steep slopes of potentially more species-rich grassland. Many hedges have been lost over the years and most fields are now quite large. However some patterns of small fields remain, in particular the remnants of a strip system just south of the village of Westleigh.

Quarrying is important to this parish both now and in the past. The large Westleigh Quarry is present on the border with Holcombe Rogus and a large roofing factory is present in Westleigh, a village that appears to have grown in recent years to accommodate the demand for labour by these businesses. In addition an old sandpit at Hillhead in the south-east is now used as a landfill.

Burlescombe parish has one County Wildlife Site, the Grand Western Canal, also a Local Nature Reserve, is the most significant wildlife feature, running through the parish in a north-south direction. This site forms an excellent wildlife corridor and provides a variety of aquatic, scrub and grassland habitats

supporting Otters and a variety of other wildlife including a nationally rare dragonfly. The parish has other good corridors in the form of the M5 trunk road and main railway line, both of which run through the parish in a southwest – northeast direction, and the disused tramway, now a footpath, which runs from Westleigh Quarry to join the railway line.

There are also two Local Wildlife Sites but one of these has been destroyed. Two potential County Wildlife Sites, at Rocknell and Southdown, look to be of interest and require further survey.

Designated Sites

Grand Western Canal County Wildlife Site

The Grand Western Canal Country Park runs between Tiverton and Holcombe Rogus, and is eleven and a quarter miles long, with an accessible and level towpath along its length. The canal was constructed to follow the contours of the landscape and employed cuttings and embankments where necessary. The canal meanders through agricultural land and small pockets of woodland providing spectacular views of the surrounding countryside. The canal also an ideal habitat for many plants and animals, including Otters and Kingfishers, and has recently been declared a Local Nature Reserve in recognition of its value for wildlife and for providing excellent opportunities for people to appreciate and learn more about nature.

County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are sites of county importance for wildlife, designated on the basis of the habitat or the known presence of particular species. This is not a statutory designation like SSSIs, and does not have any legal status. County Wildlife Sites are usually included in Local Plans as sites of regional or local biodiversity interest and are covered by Planning Policy Statement nine (PPS9). CWS recognition does not demand any particular actions on the part of the Landowner and does not give the public rights of access. However, it may increase eligibility for land management grants.

Note: ‘Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation’ was published by the Department of the Environment in August 2005. Planning Policy Statements (PPS) set out the Government’s national policies on different aspects of planning in England. PPS9 sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system. This PPS replaces Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 (PPG9) on nature conservation published in October 1994.

Devon Key Dragonfly Sites

Nationally Important Key Dragonfly Site. These are sites holding breeding populations of nationally scarce species, defined for this purpose as those which have been recorded in less than 10% of 10km squares in Britain. Those occurring in Devon are White-legged damselfly (*Playcnemis pennipes*) Scarce blue-tailed damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*) Small red damselfly (*Ceragrion tenellum*) Hairy dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*) Downy emerald (*Cordulia aenea*) and Keeled skimmer (*Orthoetrum coerulescens*).

Regionally Important Key Dragonfly Site. These are sites holding breeding populations of Regionally scarce species, designated as 'Key Species' for Devon which have been recorded in 10-20% of the 10km squares in Britain: Red-eyed damselfly (*Erythromma najas*) and Ruddy darter (*Sympetrum sanguineum*). In addition, well-studied sites with Keeled skimmer (*Orthoetrum coerulescens*) and White-legged damselfly (*Playcnemis pennipes*), and not necessarily any other key species, are included here.

The Grand Western Canal is listed on the inventory of Dragonfly sites for Devon. It is classed as 'other dragonfly sites', which means it has been surveyed but does not contain the species required to qualify it as a key site. Species included along its length include Hairy dragonfly, a nationally important species, Blue tailed damselfly and Migrant hawkler. The hairy dragonfly has been recorded at Burlescombe.

Leonards Moor Cross Local Wildlife Site

This is an area of secondary broadleaved woodland dominated by Ash and Oak with frequent young Sycamore in the understorey, surveyed in 1993 but not visited during this survey. The ground flora is described as species-rich with abundant ferns and mosses. The condition of this site is not known, it is possible that it has deteriorated as a result of Sycamore encroachment.

Little Eastbrook Farm Local Wildlife Site

Unfortunately this site was under threat when last surveyed in 1990 and has now been destroyed. A pond has been recently created on the site, which may develop some wildlife interest in time.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are sites of significant wildlife interest within a local context that do not reach the criteria for County Wildlife Sites. They are not covered by PPG9, but may be included in Local Plans.

Other habitats (identified from field survey):

Species-rich hedges

Hedgerows tend to be taken for granted as they always seem to be there, providing such a constant in a familiar landscape. However, they do require regular attention to keep them in good condition. That so many are still in good condition is a testament to the skill and hard work of generations of farmers. But there are changes even in the oldest hedgelines as the way the majority are managed has altered. There is now less farm labour available and more reliance on mechanical cutting rather than traditional hedge laying (or, as it is known in Devon, 'steeping').

Even the mechanical cutting has changed as reciprocating cutters that could cut shrub stems cleanly have given way to tractor-mounted flails which can tackle slightly older growth but at the expense of every stem being shattered. Flailing can actually promote bud development (on hawthorn, for example, research indicates that severe damage to the end of a branch encourages shoot development further down in the base of the plant which can help to thicken it up). However, flailing can also leave shrubs susceptible to infection. As individual hedge plants die, they leave gaps which render the hedge less effective and which would in the past have been filled when the hedge was next steeped.

With the advent of mechanical hedge-trimming has come another change - it is now possible to trim all the hedges on a farm in one year. It is this that perhaps has had the most impact on the vertebrate wildlife. Fruiting and seeding species are very much less productive and there is a different and less varied structure. Also, shrubs that do produce a good berry crop are sometimes cut in the early autumn before the birds, particularly the migrants, can gain any advantage from this food source. A couple of generations ago, many hedges on a farm might have been cut less frequently, allowing them to be much more productive in the meantime.

Recognising these changes does allow choices in the way hedges are managed in the future. Hedges can be cut on a two or even three year rotation. Alternatively, perhaps only one or two of the three 'faces' (the top and the two sides) could be cut in any one year. This wouldn't stop road or drive side hedges being cut from both the safety and visual aspects but for the majority of hedges it would have two major benefits: it would take less time (and hence cost) and it would benefit wildlife! However, whatever pattern of cutting is adopted, "all hedges, except perhaps holly, will need laying or coppicing sooner or later because they will become thin at the base. This is the best form of long-term management" (*Devon's hedges: Conservation and management*, Devon County Council / Devon Hedge Group).

Once it was realised nationally that many thousands of kilometres of hedgerow were being lost annually and that something ought to be done about it, the Hedgerow Regulations (made under Section 97 of the

Environment Act 1995) were introduced in England and Wales in 1997 to protect them. The Regulations are intended to prevent the removal of most countryside hedgerows without first submitting a hedgerow removal notice to the local planning authority. The local planning authorities are only able to require the retention of 'important' hedgerows. The Regulations then set out criteria to be used by the local authority in determining which hedgerows are important (Bickmore, 2002).

In such a clearly agricultural landscape, the hedgerows and hedgebanks represent continuity as features in the landscape and provide a significant wildlife resource at a time when the fields themselves are being more intensively used. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK Steering Group, 1995) lists ancient and or species-rich hedgerows as one of its priority habitats.

Various definitions of species-rich hedges have been used in different parts of the country but it would not be unreasonable to treat a hedge that has five or more woody species in a 30 metre length as a 'species-rich' one.

Hedgerows are often an essential corridor for the movement of wildlife and may support many animals and plants. Many of the hedgerows around Burlescombe parish are actually quite species rich. All of the hedges surveyed contained between five and seven species, indicating that some could be up to seven hundred years old. However the majority are trimmed to a height of less than one metre so their wildlife value is limited.

Many of the hedges are likely to have a species-rich bank flora as their low height allows more light in and encourages plant growth. Not many species were recorded due to the time of year but include Cow parsley, Ivy, Common sorrel, Herb Robert, a Vetch, Common cat's-ear, Hart's tongue, Soft shield fern and Cleavers.

Species-rich hedges are listed on the **Devon Biodiversity Action Plan** as a habitat of conservation concern in Devon. Many of the hedges along the lanes of Burlescombe would be classified as species-rich despite being over-trimmed. The hedges also provide sheltered corridors though areas of farmland some of them connecting to the corridors formed by the M5, canal and railway line.

Orchards

Traditional orchards have great cultural and landscape importance and can be really valuable habitats for a wide range of species from fungi and lichens, through insects and other invertebrates, to birds and mammals. As there is no herbicide use in most old orchards, the range of species will be even greater.

The trees themselves play host to a variety of mosses, lichens and often mistletoe. The old trees can be fantastic for hole-nesting birds. The large amount of deadwood in the trees provides an important habitat for insects and fungi including some very rare ones. For example, the Noble Chafer,

Gnorimus nobilis, is a **UK Biodiversity Action Plan** priority beetle associated with old orchards.

With such a wealth of fruit and insects available in old orchards, it is only to be expected that there is a wide range of feeding opportunities for birds and mammals. Birds such as woodpeckers (green and great-spotted), nuthatches, treecreepers and tits may be seen on tree trunks and hollow branches. Fieldfares, starlings, redwings, thrushes, blackbirds and jays will be feeding on the fruit (on or off the tree). Orchards are also home to a number of declining bird species, including tree sparrow and spotted flycatcher.

If it has escaped sprays and fertilisers, and particularly if traditional management such as a hay cut or grazing has been kept up, the ground beneath can be covered with wild flowers such as cowslips, daisies, knapweed and trefoils.

Losses of traditional orchards have been severe in recent decades, with estimates ranging from 40 per cent to 95 per cent loss. Orchards have been grubbed up to make way for other crops or for urban development.

In Burlescombe are a few orchards, at Rocknell there appears to be a fairly large orchard on a steep slope, indicating that the grassland may not be agriculturally improved. Small orchards occur in Westleigh and Burlescombe villages and another at the southern end of the parish near Holbrook Farm.

Near the northern boundary of the parish at Redhill Farm is a modern orchard forming part of a larger area within the neighbouring Holcombe Rogus parish. These tend to be of lesser wildlife value as dwarf trees are grown which are harvested mechanically and subject to an intensive management regime including pesticide use.

Cemeteries/ churchyard

Burlescombe has a fifteenth century church sited impressively on top of a hill overlooking Westleigh and the western half of the parish. Surprisingly the only mature trees found in the churchyard are Monkey-puzzle and Lleylandii. The grassland is part regularly mown and part extensively managed. Neither area is very species-rich, the main plants present being Yorkshire fog, Red fescue, Ribwort plantain, Creeping buttercup, Daisy and Lesser celandine.

Some of the the gravestones are very old and these, together with other walls in the vicinity, may support interesting lichen communities. Bats and birds such as Jackdaws are also associated with churches.

Woodland

Few woodlands are present in Burlescombe parish, most of them being small field copses. On the western boundary of the site is a large area of youngish broadleaved plantation surrounding Westleigh Quarry, which will develop into

a significant habitat feature in future years. West of here and north of Rocknell Farm is an area of mature woodland, possibly on the site of old quarries, which looks interesting and is a potential County Wildlife Site (pCWS). Another pCWS, a large area of mature broadleaved woodland on top of a hill, is present northeast of Southdown Farm.

Recreation areas and public open space

Burlescombe parish has one main footpath running along the Grand Western Canal, which is managed for both people and wildlife as a Local Nature Reserve and Country Park. This runs between the villages of Burlescombe and Westleigh so is easily accessible from the main population areas in the parish. From here people can walk south as far as Tiverton or northwards to link up to a series of paths to Wellington. From Westleigh a path leads via the quarry towards Holcombe Rogus. Apart from these there are few other footpaths of any length. Many farmers use agri-environment schemes to fund the creation of permissive paths through their land to link to existing footpaths; this is not apparent in Burlescombe but could be encouraged to provide greater access to the parish countryside.

Sports/recreational facilities seem to be limited to small football fields in Westleigh and in Burlescombe with a children's play area in Westleigh.

Allotments and gardens

Gardens are a haven for wildlife and can provide links to other areas of wildlife habitat. No species have been recorded from gardens in Burlescombe parish. The villages of Westleigh and Burlescombe have a high proportion of modern houses and many of these have gardens predominantly laid to lawn with a generally low diversity of habitats and plants.

Roadside verges and other wildlife corridors

Burlescombe has a good network of wildlife corridors in the form of the M5 road verge, the canal and the main railway line. Both are comprised of a mixture of rough grassland and scrub with some more sparsely vegetated embankment areas. These continuous areas of largely undisturbed, mixed habitats are excellent for a range of wildlife including common birds, invertebrates, reptiles such as the Slow worm, small mammals such as voles that provide food for raptors like the Barn owl and even the endangered Dormouse, which has been increasingly recorded on road verges in recent years.

Arable land

There are extensive areas of arable land in Burlescombe, especially in the southeastern part close to the M5. No evidence of agri-environment scheme participation, such as the presence of field margins, was seen during the survey so these areas are likely to be of low ecological value.

Veteran trees

It has been estimated that Britain may be home to around 80% of Europe's ancient trees. Veteran trees are large old trees found in wood-pasture and parkland, but also in a number of other locations: ancient yews in churchyards; mature oaks in hedgerows; black poplars along stream-sides; and many noble trees in ancient woodlands.

No veteran trees were seen in the parish but no doubt a few are present. Many of the hedgerows contained standard oak and ash trees, which will eventually become veteran trees, as will specimens in the secondary woodlands present.

Ancient trees support particularly rich assemblages of invertebrates, fungi, mosses and lichens. Several species of bat may use hollow trees as roosting sites and birds such as tree creepers and woodpeckers feed on the insects living in the bark. Insects such as stag beetles and hornets are associated with old trees.

Pits, quarries & cuttings

Pits, quarries and cuttings are listed on the **Devon Biodiversity Action Plan** as habitats of conservation concern in Devon. The numerous working pits and quarries in Devon are used for the extraction of a variety of minerals and are of great importance to the local and national economy. The pits and quarries are also of importance for the varied wildlife they support. Uncommon species of bird such as the peregrine falcon and raven may use the quarry edges to nest, greater and lesser horseshoe bats next in cave-like quarries and reptiles such as common lizard and adder may be found basking in sunny areas in many quarries.

On the western boundary of the parish is the large working quarry at Westleigh, and west of here at Rocknell Farm there are disused quarries that warrant further survey. Many other small copses not inspected during the survey could have grown around abandoned quarries. These are likely to be of some interest because of the limestone flora they may support as well as the fauna.

Potential County Wildlife Sites

There are eight potential County Wildlife Sites in Burlescombe parish. These are sites identified as having possible interest but not fully surveyed. Some of these sites will be areas of significant wildlife interest.

- ST01/025 Huntland Hill East: - This is potentially an area of unimproved grassland and needs to be surveyed as this habitat is very uncommon in the parish.
- ST01/030 Rocknell Quarry and ST01/031 Rocknell Woods: - These two sites are woodland on steep slopes around a disused quarry.

Immediately west of here is an extensive orchard on a steep slope which also may be of interest.

- ST01/033 Pound Farm North: - A very small area of broadleaved woodland beside the railway line.
- ST01/034 Mellish's Wood: - A good sized area of woodland next to the M5, particularly valuable as it connects to the roadside verge habitats.
- ST01/035 Park Wood: - This site is described as ancient semi-natural woodland, wet in places, and should be investigated further.
- ST01/037 Varncombe: - This is an area of broadleaved woodland of 4.4 hectares.
- ST01/038 Great Southdown Farm: - An extensive area of mature broadleaved woodland on top of a hill, the surrounding grassland is on a steep slope and may be of botanical interest.
- ST01/039 Maidenhead Cross: - Another, smaller area of broadleaved woodland.
- ST01/045 Mountstephen Farm: - A large (6.2 ha) area of broadleaved woodland at the southern tip of the parish.
- ST01/052 Houndaller plantation: - This is a planted shelterbelt surrounding an old sand pit now being used as a landfill site.

Species

Important Species

A report from the DBRC database showing what legally protected, locally notable or noteworthy (eg Japanese Knotweed) species are known to have been present in and around Burlescombe has been prepared and is presented separately (Appendix 1).

Birds

A few species of birds were recorded during the survey including Jackdaw, Moorhen, Mallard, Mute swan, Crow, Blackbird, Rook, Robin, Wren and House sparrow. Bird activity was limited due to the cold spring weather.

The data search provides a more interesting list, mainly from the Grand Western Canal, which includes Reed Bunting, a Birds of Conservation Concern red list species (see data search for status definitions), and two amber list species, Kingfisher and Grey wagtail.

Plants

Plant species noted on a visit on the 10th March are listed in Appendix 2.

No notable species were recorded during the survey, partly because of the time of year but also because the habitats visited were of fairly low conservation value. The data search shows a few notable species, most

interestingly Fine leaved sandwort, a nationally scarce species, which appears to be present where the old tramway crosses the canal between Westleigh and Burlescombe. From the regularity of the records it shows that this colony is being monitored, perhaps by a local naturalist. Other notable species are Bluebell, Distant sedge (from the defunct Little Eastbrook Farm LWS) and Primrose, which was also recorded during the field survey.

The Primrose is listed on the **Devon Biodiversity Action Plan** as it is intended to help to raise public awareness of the need to conserve commonplace and characteristic elements of Devon's countryside. The primrose is not rare in Devon, but it may act as an indicator species to the health of Devon's environment, and by conserving the primrose, we may help to conserve some of the habitats in which it is found. These include woodlands, hedges, road verges and churchyards.

Mammals

Several mammal species have been recorded from Burlescombe parish. These include Badger, a very common species, signs of which were found widely during the field survey. The Devon and UK BAP species Otter is recorded near the Grand Western Canal at Ayshford. Formerly widespread throughout the UK, the otter underwent a rapid decline in numbers from the 1950s to 1970s and was effectively lost from midland and south-eastern counties of England by the 1980s. Populations remain in Wales, south-west England and much of Scotland, where sea loch and coastal colonies comprise one of the largest populations in Europe. There is also a significant population of otters in Northern Ireland. The decline now appears to have halted and sightings are being reported in former habitats. Devon has an internationally important otter population and otters are now found on most watercourses and wetlands throughout the County. Otters are even now recolonising areas where they were thought to have been lost during the 60's and 70's. The main serious threat to otters today is from road kills, with many animals sadly reported dead each year.

Two species of bat, the uncommon Lesser Horseshoe, a UK BAP species, and the Brown Long-eared, have been recorded roosting at Mountstephen House just south of the parish's southern boundary. These species forage over a wide area so are likely to be using the parish for feeding. Another mammal recorded in the wider area is the Hedgehog, from a site in Uffculme.

Invertebrates

No invertebrates were recorded during the field survey due to the time of year and bad weather. The data search shows that the Hairy dragonfly, a nationally important species, has been recorded from the Grand Western Canal. Another notable invertebrate recorded on the Grand Western Canal at Burlescombe is the Brown hairstreak butterfly. This species is probably laying its eggs on Blackthorn beside the canal towpaths. The Brown hairstreak has declined considerably in the last 40 years due to yearly hedge trimming, as it

only lays its eggs on two-year old wood. The canal banks are probably one of the last refuges for this species in Burlescombe.

Two notable butterflies have been recorded at Maiden Down, a SSSI just east of the parish. These are the declining Small pearl-bordered fritillary and Green hairstreak. The small pearl-bordered fritillary and brown hairstreak are listed on the **UK Biodiversity Action Plan**.

Reptiles and Amphibians

The survey was carried out when reptiles are hibernating and it was too cold & early to see spawning amphibians. The only species recorded by the data search is the Viviparous or common lizard near Westleigh Quarry. Grass snake, Common frog and Slow worm have also been recorded outside the parish at Uffculme.

Despite this most common species of reptile and amphibian are likely to occur in Burlescombe. The canal will support frogs, toads and probably grass snakes. Slow worms will be found wherever there is tussocky grassland such as field margins and hedgebanks, and the old quarries may provide good basking and hunting areas for Adders.

The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) describes the key actions needed to look after 37 of Devon's most important habitats and species. It does not stand alone, but is part of a much wider process aimed at conserving our biodiversity.

The Devon BAP is a direct descendent of a process started at the famous 'Earth Summit' held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At this summit, world leaders pledged to halt and reverse the loss of the planet's biodiversity. For its part, the UK government produced a series of Action Plans for a great many threatened habitats and species. These national plans have been joined by a series of regional Action Plans aimed at providing a more local perspective.

The Devon BAP builds on this endeavour, identifying local priorities and providing targets and plans of action for the County.

All of this work has one aim: to encourage practical action on the ground. Its success depends upon us all.

Biodiversity links:

- The Devon BAP can be viewed at www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity. This site also contains links to other nature conservation issues relevant to Devon, such as information on hedges. If you do not have access to the internet and require paper copies of relevant sections of the Devon BAP please contact Devon County Council's Biodiversity Officer on 01392 382804.
- Details of biodiversity planning in the South West region can be viewed at www.swbiodiversity.org.uk.
- National Action Plans can be viewed at www.ukbap.org.uk. This site also contains useful background information on UK biodiversity action planning.

Links between the wildlife of insert parish and the Devon BAP:

insert parish wildlife feature	Brief description of feature	Link with the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)
<i>Grand Western Canal County Wildlife Site</i>	<i>Aquatic and water's edge habitats</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Otter Species Action Plan</i>
<i>Species rich hedgerows</i>	<i>Hedges containing more than five woody species on average</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Species-rich hedges Habitat Action Plan</i>• <i>Primrose Species Action Plan</i>
<i>Rocknell Quarry potential County Wildlife Site</i>	<i>Woodland and possible calcareous grassland on the site of disused quarries</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Pits, quarries and cuttings Habitat Action Plan</i>

View the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan at www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity.

Some Ideas for Local Action...

This section of the report is provided by Devon County Council (contact: nature@devon.gov.uk).

A major step to knowing what you can do for your local wildlife and geology is to know what you have already got. This report will help you in this, but it is just a start.

Ultimately, the protection and enhancement of the local natural environment requires the interest and enthusiasm of the local community.

There follow some initial ideas for local nature conservation action. Many of them will directly help to achieve the objectives of the habitat and species action plans contained in the **Devon Biodiversity Action Plan**.

It is by no means an exhaustive list. As a community, you may have many more ideas for action that you would like to take forward in the coming years.

1 Further survey:

This report is just a beginning. Carrying out further survey within your area will help build a better picture of the wildlife present, and of the opportunities for enhancement. Gaining a better understanding of the resource is usually a key objective of the Devon BAP's habitat and species action plans.

Specific features to survey in Burlescombe might include hedgerow surveys of the whole parish. The last two actions would directly contribute to the **Species rich hedges Action Plan** and the **Primrose Action Plan**.

Comparing the current distribution of hedges against boundary lines shown on old maps will give a clue as to how this important resource has changed over recent years. It may also highlight opportunities for restoring hedges in your area. It might also be possible to assess the condition of hedges and this may, in turn, give some ideas about improving their future management to benefit wildlife.

Survey work could be undertaken as a community group or in liaison with conservation groups active in the area. For example, the Devon Wildlife Trust is active in the area and is in the process of setting up a local group based in Tiverton. It carries out otter surveys every year using volunteers – this would be a good way of monitoring the otters on the canal. In addition the Mid Devon Natural History Society holds monthly meetings in Tiverton.

Help to build up a picture of the state of Devon's environment by sending your records to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre where they can be properly collated.

2 Influence the management of Public Open Space:

Creating areas of more species-rich grassland will help to reduce the isolation of the remaining fragments of traditionally managed agricultural land, contributing to the **Flower-rich Meadows and Pastures Action Plan**. Churchyards have often received less intensive management than the surrounding land and can provide good opportunities for wildlife.

Planting up areas that are currently of little wildlife interest with new copses of native trees and shrubs will also help to attract wildlife. Suitable sites might include unused areas of playing fields, for example.

3 Build relationships with local landowners:

Encourage the adoption of more wildlife-friendly land management. For example, hedges which are cut only every other year will provide an autumn and winter source of nuts and berries for birds and small mammals (and can save the landowner money in management costs). The improved management of hedgerows is a key objective of the **Species-rich Hedges Action Plan**. If the owner is willing, why not get involved with practical management, such as traditional hedge laying or pond restoration?

4 Adopt a road verge:

Many verges can have a significant value for wildlife because they have escaped the intensive management of the surrounding farmland. Ensuring such verges are managed for their wildlife is a very positive step, again contributing to the **Flower-rich Meadows and Pastures Action Plan**.

There are, of course, obvious health and safety implications to roadside management. It is an action that would need to be undertaken in close liaison with the relevant highways authority (generally, this is the Highways Agency for motorways and trunk roads, and Devon County Council for all other roads).

5 Wildlife gardening:

Green up your garden! Collectively the gardens of Burlescombe represent a significant area that could be used to benefit wildlife. Large or small, you can turn your garden (or a part of it!) into a haven for wildlife. A very good source of information on wildlife gardening is the English Nature web site:

www.english-nature.org.uk/Nature_In_The_Garden

English Nature is the Government's adviser on nature conservation. Its web site also contains links to a number of other very useful sources of information.

6 Join local conservation organisations:

Examples of prominent local conservation organisations are the Devon Wildlife Trust and the Mid Devon Natural History Society. These trusts have a number of Local Groups that, amongst other things, get involved in practical management work.

7 Japanese Knotweed:

Not something to cherish, but it can't be ignored! Luckily, Japanese Knotweed has not been recorded from Burlescombe. Introduced into Britain by the Victorians, Japanese Knotweed is a native of Japan, north China, Korea and Taiwan. It flourishes in Britain's mild and fertile environment and has no natural biological enemies here. Consequently, it is very invasive and can overrun large areas, replacing our native flora. It is a serious pest, which can be so vigorous as to cause significant damage to buildings and roads. It is also a difficult plant to eradicate.

For these reasons Japanese Knotweed is listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as a plant that is not to be planted or otherwise introduced into the wild. In addition, all parts of the plant are considered as controlled waste under the Waste Regulations.

What can you do?

- Firstly, it is important to build up a picture of where Japanese Knotweed is present. This will give an idea of the scale of the problem and will help to prevent it being accidentally spread during any ditch clearance, highway work and so on. To help develop an understanding of the problem in Devon, records should also be sent to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre¹. Ideally, records should include when you first saw it and confirmation of when it was seen most recently; its precise location (notes or a sketch map are helpful, as is a grid reference if you have one); the kind of habitat it is in (e.g. next to running water, on a road verge), and a rough indication of how abundant it is.
- Secondly, be careful not to spread the plant further! This is all too easily done as it can regenerate from even the smallest fragment and is easy to spread unknowingly. It is important not to flail it or to try and dig it up. Often, it is best not to cut Japanese Knotweed at all, but if it is it should be

¹ DBRC, Shirehampton House, 35-37 St David's Hill, Exeter, Devon, EX4 4DA. Phone: 01392 273244; Fax: 01392 433221; E-mail: dbrc@devonwt.cix.co.uk

very carefully disposed of on site when dead or removed as Controlled Waste. Any tools used should be properly cleaned.

- Finally, if Japanese Knotweed is on your land, the best way to prevent its spread is to control or eradicate it as soon as possible. Regular cutting can weaken and eventually kill the plant but it is a time-consuming job and proper disposal of the cut material can be a problem. Usually, the most effective method of control is to treat the plant with herbicide. This can take a number of years to be successful but if the plant is left untreated it will inevitably spread. A number of issues should be taken into account in deciding which herbicide to use, particularly the presence of water (where special care needs to be taken and the advice of the Environment Agency must be sought).

Fortunately, a great deal of advice (including an Environment Agency Code of Practice) is available on the Devon Knotweed Forum's web pages. You are recommended to view these at:

www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity/japanese_knotweed.

Useful sources of further information:

The following organisations can offer advice and information on various wildlife topics as well as organising events and carrying out projects.

- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers: www.btcvcd.org.uk
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- Butterfly Conservation: www.butterfly-conservation.org
- Devon Bat Group: www.dbg.me.uk
- Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society: Secretary tel: 01837 53360
- Devon Mammal Group: www.devonmammalgroup.org
- Devon Wildlife Trust: www.devonwildlifetrust.org
- English Nature: www.english-nature.org.uk
- Plantlife: www.plantlife.org.uk
- RSPB: www.rspb.org.uk
- The Woodland Trust: www.woodland-trust.org.uk
- The Living Churchyards & Cemeteries Project, Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Society, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LZ
Tel: 01203 696969 ext. 364/339.

In addition, Devon County Council is currently (June 2006) developing a Community Biodiversity Toolkit which will be available via the DCC web site (www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity). This toolkit will aim to provide practical advice on management to encourage wildlife and, in particular, will provide a central point from which to access the large amount of advice that is already available from a huge range of other organisations.

In addition to management advice, the toolkit will also provide guidance on seeking funding for project work. In the meantime, you may find the following sources of funding useful.

Possible sources of funding:

A number of potential sources of funding are available for local biodiversity projects. Each has its own rules, criteria and objectives, and funding sources are sometimes only available for a limited period of time. However, the following may well be worth checking for suitability (not all will be applicable to your particular parish):

- Awards for All: National Lottery grants aimed at communities. www.awardsforall.org.uk
- Biffawards: small grants for biodiversity projects within 10 miles of a Biffa operation (landfill). <http://www.biffaward.org/projects/smallgrants.php>
- British Dragonfly Society: grants of £250 for pond building. <http://www.dragonflysoc.org.uk/>
- Breathing Places: grants available for the creation of community green spaces. Distributed by the Big Lottery Fund. <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/breathingplaces/index.html>
- Countryside Trust Awards: 01242 521382 or www.countryside.org
- Defra's Environmental Action Fund. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/eaf/>
- Defra: information about woodland grant schemes. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/wgs/default.htm>
- Enriching Nature Programme (SITA Trust): for biodiversity projects within 10 miles of a landfill site. http://www.sitatrust.org.uk/nature/apply_nature
- Exmoor National Park: conservation grants for projects within the National Park. http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/index/living_in/living_in_grants.htm
- Esmée Fairburn Foundation: grant-giving trust for environmental projects. <http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/programmes/env.html>
- Forestry Commission: grants and sources of funding available for improving biodiversity. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/hcou-4u4j28>
- Hanson Environmental Fund: if you live within 5 miles of a Hanson quarry. <http://www.hansonenvfund.org/welcome.php>
- Heritage Lottery Fund: various grants for different types of community projects. <http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/>
- Living Spaces: projects to enhance the environment of communities. 0845 600 3190 or www.living-spaces.org.uk.
- Local Heritage Initiative: 01226 719019 or www.lhi.org.uk.
- Tree Council: small grants for schools and communities for tree planting schemes. <http://www.treecouncil.org.uk/>

If you are within Dartmoor or Exmoor National Parks, or within one of Devon's five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) it may also be worth exploring if your project is eligible for support through the **Sustainable Development Fund**.

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Websites:

www.woodland-trust.org.uk

www.devonwildlifetrust.org

Appendix 1 – Notable sites and species within Burlescombe Parish.

File Code	Site Name	Grid Ref.	Area (ha)	Description	Status
ST01/029	Lower Whipcott	ST 069185	6.5	Disused quarry with unimproved calcareous grassland, semi-improved neutral grassland and secondary broadleaved woodland	gSSSI
ST01/040	Maiden Down	ST 087160	39.5	Lowland dry and wet heath supporting a rich invertebrate fauna	SSSI
ST01/051	No Man's Land Plantation	ST055132	3.8	Secondary broadleaved woodland	LWS
ST01/036	Little Eastbrook Farm	ST079172	1.6	Secondary broadleaved woodland, wet in areas, with scrub & unimproved marshy grassland	LWS
SS91/079	Grand Western Canal	SS963123-SS999136	23.6	Canal with associated wetland flora & marshy grassland	CWS/Country Park
ST01/037	Varncombe	ST086173	4.4	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS
ST01/039	Maidenhead Cross	ST081169	1.8	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS
ST01/038	Great Southdown Farm	ST082152	3.9	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS
ST01/033	Pound Farm North	ST065161	0.8	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS
ST01/034	Mellish's Wood	ST063152	4.0	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS
ST01/035	Park Wood	ST074170	2.4	Ancient semi-natural woodland, wet in areas	pCWS
ST01/052	Houndaller Plantation	ST061142	4.0	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS
ST01/025	Huntland Hill East	ST047160	1.8	Unimproved grassland	pCWS
ST01/045	Mountstephen Farm	ST040132	6.1	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS
ST01/030	Rocknell Quarry	ST053169	2.8	Disused limestone quarry with rich flora	pCWS
ST01/031	Rocknell Woods	ST053167	7.8	Broadleaved woodland	pCWS

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): these are notified by English Nature because of their plants, animals or geological features (the latter are geological SSSIs or gSSSI). English Nature needs to be consulted before any operations likely to damage the special interest are undertaken. SSSI is a statutory designation with legal implications.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC): these are notified by English Nature because they contain species and/or habitats of European importance (listed in the Habitats Directive 1994), and are part of a network of conservation sites set up through Europe known as the Natura 2000 series. On land, all candidate SACs are, or will be notified as SSSIs. English Nature needs to be consulted before any operations likely to damage the special interest are undertaken. SAC is a statutory designation with legal implications.

County Wildlife Sites (CWS): these are sites of county importance for wildlife, designated on the basis of the habitat or the known presence of particular species. This is not a statutory designation like SSSIs, and does not have any legal status. County Wildlife Sites are usually included in Local Plans as sites of substantive nature conservation interest and are covered by Planning Policy Guidance note nine (PPG9). CWS recognition does not demand any particular actions on the part of the Landowner and does not give the public rights of access. However, it may increase eligibility for land management grants.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS): these are sites of significant wildlife interest within a local context that do not reach the criteria for County Wildlife Sites. They are not covered by PPG9, but may be included in Local Plans.

Potential County Wildlife Sites / Unconfirmed County Wildlife Sites (pCWS or Unc): these are sites identified as having possible interest but not fully surveyed. Some of these sites will be areas of significant wildlife interest.

Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI): Ancient Woodland is a term applied to woodlands which have existed from at least Medieval times to the present day without ever having been cleared for uses other than wood or timber production. A convenient date used to separate ancient and secondary woodland is about the year 1600. In special circumstances semi-natural woods of post-1600 but pre-1900 origin are also included. The Devon Ancient Woodland Inventory was prepared in 1986 by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Notable Species within 1 kilometre of Burlescombe Parish

Wildlife Sites within Burlescombe Parish

No.	Name	Latin Name	Location	Date	Grid Ref.	UK Protection	International Protection	Status
1	Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	M5	2000	ST0312	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	Grand Western Canal.	2003	ST037147			Amber
3	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Boehill Bridge	2004	ST039148	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP(P); DBAP
4	Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	A361	2002	ST042145	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
5	Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Tiverton Parkway train station.	2001	ST045140	WCA 1		Amber
6	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Grand Western Canal.	2003	ST045149			UKBAP(P); Red
7	Brown Long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Mountstephen House, Uffculme, Cullompton.	1997	ST047127	WCA 5, 6	EC IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	
8	Lesser Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Mountstephen House, Uffculme, Cullompton.	1997	ST047127	WCA 5, 6	EC IIa, IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	UKBAP(P)
9	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Ayshford	2004	ST047152	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP(P); DBAP
10	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Grand Western Canal.	2003	ST055158			Amber
11	Viviparous Lizard	<i>Lacerta vivipara</i>	Westleigh, near Tiverton,	2001	ST055169	WCA 5(KIS)	Bern III	
12	Hairy Dragonfly	<i>Brachytron pratense</i>	Grand Western Canal.	2003	ST060163			Nb; KeyD (N)
13	Common Frog	<i>Rana</i>	Clay Lane, Uffculme	2001-	ST067127	WCA 5(S)	EC Va; Bern	

		temporaria		2002			III	
14	Grass Snake	Natrix natrix	Clay Lane, Uffculme	2000	ST067127	WCA 5(KIS)	Bern III	
15	Hedgehog	Erinaceus europaeus	Clay Lane, Uffculme	2001	ST067127	WCA 6	Bern III	
16	Slow-worm	Anguis fragilis	Clay Lane, Uffculme	2001	ST067127	WCA 5(KIS)	Bern III	
17	Common Frog	Rana temporaria	Oid Bridgehouse, Bridge St. Uffculme	2002	ST068126	WCA 5(S)	EC Va; Bern III	
18	Fine-leaved Sandwort	Minuartia hybrida	Burlescombe	1986	ST068168			NS; DN1; DR
19	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea	Grand Western Canal.	2003	ST068169			Amber
20	Mute Swan	Cygnus olor	Grand Western Canal.	2003	ST068169			Amber
21	Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus	Grand Western Canal.	2003	ST068169			UKBAP(P); Red
22	a bat	bat sp.	Ashley Road, Uffculme, near Cullompton.	1996	ST069130	WCA 5, 6	EC IVa; Bonn II	
23	Fine-leaved Sandwort	Minuartia hybrida	Burlescombe	1989-2005	ST069169			NS; DN1; DR
24	Bluebell	Hyacinthoides non-scripta	Park Wood	1987	ST074170	WCA 8 (S)		
25	Bluebell	Hyacinthoides non-scripta	Little Eastbrook Farm	1990	ST079172	WCA 8 (S)		
26	Distant Sedge	Carex distans	Little Eastbrook Farm	1990	ST079172			DN2
27	Almond Willow	Salix triandra	Five Fords Fen	1988	ST081138			DN1
28	Primrose	Primula vulgaris	Five Fords Fen	1988	ST081138			DBAP
29	Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus	Five Fords Fen	1988	ST081138			UKBAP(P); Red

30	Badger	Meles meles	A38	2000	ST087167	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
31	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea	Silver Street Farm, Prescott, near Culmstock.	2003	ST091144			Amber
32	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	Silver Street Farm, Prescott, near Culmstock.	2003	ST091144			Red
33	Badger	Meles meles	Between Appledore and Woodgate	2000	ST091151	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
34	Brown Hairstreak	Thecla betulae		1996	ST0414	WCA 5 (S)		Nb
35	Brown Hairstreak	Thecla betulae	Grand Western Canal.	1997	ST058161	WCA 5 (S)		Nb
36	Wood White	Leptidea sinapis	Woodgate	1990	ST0814	WCA 5 (S)		Nb
37	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Boloria selene	Maiden Down	1994	ST085159			Decline
38	Green Hairstreak	Callophrys rubi	Maiden Down	1994	ST085159			Decline

WCA 1 **Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 1:** birds which are protected by special penalties at all times.

WCA 5 **Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 5:** species protected against killing, injury, disturbance and handling.

WCA 5 (S) **Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 5: (sale):** species protected against sale only.

WCA 6 **Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 6:** animals (other than birds) which may not be killed or taken by certain methods

BA	Protection of Badgers Act 1992: badgers may not be deliberately killed, persecuted or trapped except under licence. Badger setts may not be damaged, destroyed or obstructed.
Bern III	Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) Appendix III: Exploitation of listed animal species to be subject to regulation
Bern II	Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) Appendix II: Special protection for listed animal species and their habitats.
ECVa, Vb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex Va and Vb: Exploitation of listed animals and plants to be subject to management if necessary.
ECIVa, IVb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex IVa: Exploitation of listed animals and plants to be subject to management if necessary.
ECIIa, IIb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex IIa and IIb: Designation of protected areas for animal and plant species listed.
ECIIIa, IIIb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex IIIa and IIb: Species used as criteria for designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
Bonn II	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention) Appendix II: Range states encouraged to conclude international agreements to benefit species listed.
UKBAP(P)	UK Priority Species (Short and Middle Lists - UK Biodiversity steering Group Report 1995) i.e. species that are globally threatened and rapidly declining in the UK (by more than 50% in the last 25 years). Has a Species Action Plan.
DBAP	Devon Biodiversity Action Plan species: these have been identified as species of key conservation concern in Devon.
Decline	Substantial local decline in Devon
Amber List	Bird species of medium conservation concern, such as those whose population is in moderate decline, rare breeders, internationally important and localised species and those of unfavourable conservation status in Europe.
Red List	Bird species of high conservation concern, such as those whose population or range is rapidly declining, recently or historically, and those of global conservation concern.

Nb **Nationally Notable B:** recorded from 30-100 10km squares in Great Britain since 1980

NS **Nationally Scarce:** 15-100 10km squares in Atlas of British Flora 1962.

Devon Notable Species: Selected species recorded from over 50 2km squares in the Atlas of Devon Flora 1984 (R.B. Ivimey-Cook, Department of Biological Sciences, The University of Exeter).

DN1 **Devon Notable¹:** 1-25 2 km squares in Atlas of Devon Flora 1984.

DN2 **Devon Notable²:** 26-50 2 km squares in Atlas of Devon Flora 1984.

DN3 **Devon Notable³:** Selected species recorded from over 50 2 km squares in Atlas of Devon Flora 1984.

DR **Devon Rarity:** native species recorded from 3 or fewer localities within Devon

Appendix 2

Species list for Burlescombe parish, recorded during the field survey on 10th March 2006.

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow parsley
<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>	Fool's watercress
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords-and-ladies
<i>Auracaria auracana</i>	Monkey puzzle
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver birch
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Buddleia
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood
<i>Cupressocyparis leylandii</i>	Leyland cypress
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male fern
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great willowherb
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Herb bennet
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground-ivy
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog
<i>Holcus mollis</i>	Creeping soft-grass
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft rush
<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>	Yellow archangel
<i>Lemna minor</i>	Duckweed
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial rye-grass
<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>	Hemlock water-dropwort
<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	Reed canary-grass
<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>	Hart's tongue
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>	Common polypody
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Quercus robur</i>	English oak
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow buttercup
<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	Lesser celandine
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog-rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common sorrel
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock

Salix cinerea
Sambucus nigra
Silene dioica
Taraxacum officianale agg.
Trifolium repens
Typha latifolia
Ulex europaeus
Ulmus procera
Urtica dioica

Grey willow
Elder
Red campion
Dandelion
White clover
Bullrush
Common gorse
English elm
Common nettle