



## Status of Nottinghamshire's Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species - February 2014

Nottinghamshire's Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), *Action for Wildlife in Nottinghamshire*, was first published in 1998 by the Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group. The plan provides a framework for work on nature conservation in the county, identifying priority habitats and species that require particular action to ensure their conservation and recovery.

The LBAP originally included 8 Species Action Plans (SAPs), to which a further 5 have been added since 2004. This short report summarises actions that have taken place for the species covered by these SAPs, and seeks to establish to what degree the targets in the SAPs have been met, and to identify current population trends, based on current knowledge.

In summary:

- 2 species have increased or are increasing
- 6 species are stable or probably stable
- 3 species are decreasing or probably decreasing
- 2 species have an unknown population trend

[NB Grizzled and dingy skipper are covered by the same Species Action Plan but have been treated separately for the purposes of this report]

### Atlantic salmon

*Summary: targets partially met, population unknown*

Atlantic salmon had completely disappeared from the River Trent system by the mid-1930s, largely as a result of poor water quality and modification of the watercourse. The introduction of young salmon to the River Dove has been ongoing since 1998 in an attempt to kick start a population recovery. Today, the vast improvement to water quality and the delivery of fish passes at known significant barriers (two of which are in Nottinghamshire) has,

in conjunction with the stocking programme, resulted in adult fish returning and to spawn successfully in the headwaters of the Dove and in the middle Derwent. Much work is still required in delivering fish passage improvements and improving habitat, a challenge for all the partners operating within the catchment.

### Barn owl

*Summary: targets largely met, population increased & currently stable*

Barn owls have made a significant recovery across the county during the last decade, particularly so in the Trent valley and arable areas. The county's barn owl distribution has been mapped and the current status of this population is being monitored by barn owl projects and ringing groups. This work also includes the maintenance of a network of barn owl boxes and working with a large number of private landowners. From the data that has been collated since 2001 the number of pairs of barn owls appears to have doubled in monitored sites during the last decade, and stabilised in 2009-12. Successive mild winters, agri-environment schemes and nest boxes will all have helped here.

### Bats

*Summary: targets partially met, populations of most species probably stable*

The national population trend for the majority of Nottinghamshire's bat species is stable and it is reasonable to expect the local situation to be similar. The baseline for these figures, however, come from the late 1990s after the major decline in bat numbers had happened. Two new species, Nathusius' pipistrelle and barbastelle, have been added to the county list since 1998, and Leisler's bat seems to be showing an increase in range although this could also be due to increased observer efforts. Several local surveys are part of

the wider national monitoring project and Nottinghamshire Bat Group have begun to use transects and remote recording to monitor key bat habitats. Bat box schemes around the county are also providing increased roosting and monitoring opportunities.

### **Deptford pink**

*Summary: targets partially met, population stable*

The Deptford pink is a nationally endangered plant which occurs at one site in south Nottinghamshire. The site has been monitored since 2003, when a population of 120 plants was recorded prior to a successful translocation taking place later that year; subsequently the population increased to 200 plants in 2005, and peaked at 474 plants in 2010. A Species Action Plan was written in 2008, with the targets of maintaining a viable population at the site (which has been met), and increasing the 2008 population size by 25% by 2015 (this appears unlikely to be met, but the population remains stable with an average of just over 400 plants each year between 2008 and 2013).

### **Grizzled skipper**

*Summary: targets largely met, population stable*

The grizzled skipper has experienced a 64% decline in abundance over 25 years across the country. Locally the butterfly is restricted to the south of the county in within four population complexes, largely within the borough of Rushcliffe, and regular monitoring indicates that the butterfly is now stable. A SITA Trust funded project targeting this species has recently come to its conclusion, which led to 13 of the 23 known grizzled skipper sites now being under favourable management, and has confirmed that the species can now be found in 5 10km squares within Nottinghamshire, increasing from 4 in 1998.

### **Dingy skipper**

*Summary: targets largely met, population stable*

The dingy skipper has experienced a similar rate of decline in abundance to that of the grizzled skipper, but the butterfly is now stable on many of the old coalfields in the north-west of the county where habitat has become favourable following the

closure of the mines. In recent years the Dingy Skipper has also colonised several brownfield sites in the south of the county. Some of the sites have local management plans but others remain vulnerable to future development.

### **Harvest mouse**

*Summary: targets partially met, population unknown*

Harvest mice suffered substantial declines nationally in the last century, largely as a result of agricultural intensification. In Nottinghamshire, their distribution and status is still poorly known and unfortunately a comprehensive survey has not been undertaken. Recent work in the county has indicated that harvest mice can be more abundant than previously thought in areas of suitable habitat and work is currently underway to trial new and more effective survey methods. This work should enable more accurate records of the local population to be established in the future. At the current time however not enough is known about their distribution to be able to define a trend since the SAP was written.

### **Hazel pot beetle**

*Summary: targets met, population stable*

The RDB1 (endangered) hazel pot beetle has maintained a stable population within a single area of the Sherwood Forest Country Park, since its rediscovery in 2008. Survey work since this time has confirmed its continued presence at this location, whilst in 2013 a male Hazel Pot Beetle was discovered at a new site in Clumber Park and there was an unconfirmed report of a female from Budby South Forest. In order to ensure the continued presence of this species it is very important that sympathetic management is carried out at known sites.

### **Nightjar**

*Summary: targets not met, population declining*

Nationally, the nightjar population (both number of individuals and number of 10 km square occupied) is increasing. However, recent BTO surveys show that the population in Nottinghamshire is declining. To date, conservation efforts for this species locally

have been patchy; much of the heathland in Sherwood has been managed to meet botanical designation requirements, and this has often been at the expense of the requirements of nightjar. Increased tourism and recreation at sites in Sherwood has also had a negative effect on populations, leading to many territories becoming occupied by unpaired males. As a result, recent figures for 2013 show the number of pairs to be 56, below the target of maintaining the breeding population at 59 pairs (1997 levels) and increasing it to 72 pairs by 2005.

### **Nottingham autumn crocus and Nottingham spring crocus**

*Summary: targets partially met, populations probably stable*

Spring crocus and autumn crocus are both archaeophytes and neophytes in Nottinghamshire. The archaeophyte populations are considered to be naturalised and are of significant cultural and historical interest. The county-wide distribution of the archaeophyte populations of both species have been mapped by the Nottinghamshire Biological & Geological Records Centre and the information has been included in the Nottinghamshire Rare Plants Register. Work is underway to make Landowners aware of suitable management techniques to maintain populations and spring crocus populations at the University of Nottingham are being monitored and opportunities for spreading the populations across the campus have been discussed.

### **Otter**

*Summary: targets largely met, population increasing*

By the mid 1970's the UK otter population had been reduced to a point where the only significant populations of this species existed in Scotland, Wales and the West Country. Subsequently, data from national surveys has indicated a strong expansion in their range throughout the UK. In Nottinghamshire there has been a considerable expansion of range on the River Trent between Nottingham and Newark, and on the River Devon and River Idle, although there seems to be little or

no otter activity between Newark and Gainsborough, and there remains a lot of work to do before this species is present throughout the county. A local monitoring programme, based on the national survey, would help identify otter presence or absence in Nottinghamshire and would help direct efforts to provide habitat improvements.

### **Water vole**

*Summary: targets partially met, population declining*

Water vole suffered a dramatic decline in the UK throughout the last century, and in Nottinghamshire, a comprehensive survey of most watercourses in 1998-9 identified marked declines in populations for some areas of Nottinghamshire since previous survey work undertaken in the 1970s. This work indicated that Nottinghamshire has a widely distributed population of water voles with particular hotspots in the west and north. Since this time more recent surveys have shown a mixed picture, but overall the population of water vole is still declining. Substantial efforts have been made by a wide range of BAG partners to ensure that water vole conservation is taken in to account. Efforts have also been made to undertake mink control in a small number of locations.

### **White-clawed crayfish**

*Summary: targets partially met, population probably declining*

White-clawed crayfish is a species that is in decline across the country and is predicted to be extinct in the UK by 2030. Locally, white clawed crayfish maintains a strong presence in catchments in the west of Nottinghamshire. Monitoring work in the late 1990's and more recently as part of an ongoing project since 2009, has established that the majority of these populations are still in place. However, there have been losses at some locations. Targets to maintain and increase populations of white-clawed crayfish into future years will prove very difficult to achieve with the discovery of a breeding population of signal crayfish within the Leen catchment in November 2013.