

Introduction

Berkshire holds a wealth of wildlife interest, some of which is conserved within nationally designated sites, but much remains in the wider countryside outside of protected areas. The goodwill and commitment of land owners and managers towards conserving wildlife is critical in protecting the remaining wildlife of Berkshire. It is important therefore to identify these areas so that landowners can be assisted in protecting and sustainably managing them in the future.

What are Local Wildlife Sites?

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are non-statutory areas identified by the local Unitary Authority because of their countywide wildlife value.

Why are they important?



Berkshire has a large number of LWS covering approximately 10% of the county. They are important for a range of reasons, including:

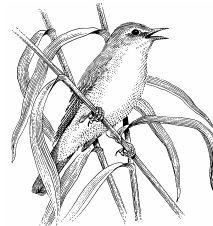
- They contain habitats and species that are nationally uncommon as well as threatened. As such they are often listed as being a priority for protection in the UK Government's Biodiversity Action Plan,
- They can support a diverse range of species and habitats and can be very important areas of biological richness,
- They act as wildlife corridors or links between other important habitats and are important in aiding wildlife to move around the countryside,

- They may also function as buffers to more sensitive sites helping to protect core wildlife areas.

How are Local Wildlife Sites identified?

LWS are identified and assessed against a set of selection criteria following a biological survey (with owner permission). The criteria are wholly based on the wildlife interest of the site and no other factors are taken into consideration.

A Selection Panel comprising representatives from the Unitary Authorities in Berkshire and environmental organisations meet to approve the selection of new sites and to review existing LWS.



The LWS selection criteria allow consideration of the following:

- Sites containing rich habitats such as unimproved grassland, wetlands, heathland and bogs
- Sites of ancient semi-natural woodland (over 1ha) and other woodlands rich in wildlife
- Sites containing good populations or collections of protected or notable species.
- Sites of historic parkland/wood pasture of nature conservation interest.
- Other sites of nature conservation importance in a District/Borough or county context.

For a more detailed list of the criteria contact TVERC or visit the website (see contacts list).

Does it affect the way a landowner manages their land?

There are no legal restrictions on the owners or managers of a LWS, other than those which already exist on an area of land. Continuing, sympathetic management of the site will help maintain its wildlife interest.

Can a landowner get help in protecting a LWS?

Landowners should contact their local FWAG, Natural England office or Unitary Authority for advice and grant aid for management (see contacts list).



Is public access affected?

No new rights of access are created and all existing rights of way are unaffected by LWS identification.

How does it relate to existing designations?



LWS designation does not affect any existing statutory designations or restrictions on the site.

Is identification as a LWS a precursor to designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)?

No, the two systems are independent.

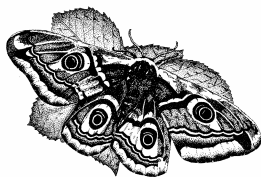
How does the Local Authority and the Environmental Records Centre use information on a LWS?

All confirmed LWS are listed in the Unitary Authority's Local Plan. Unitary Authorities take into account LWS information to assist them in making decisions on planning applications and long term planning issues.

TVERC collects species and habitat information on LWS in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. It aims to act as a focus for all wildlife information in the two counties and will make this data available to bona fide enquirers with due regard to confidential and sensitive information. Ultimately, this information will help in protecting wildlife throughout Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

How can I find out more about these sites?

The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre holds detailed data on the wildlife interest of LWS. This information is freely available to all owners and managers of LWS and landowners will receive copies of the LWS survey report.



Contacts:

For information and advice on managing a LWS please contact:

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

BBO FWAG, Unit 11, Blenheim Office Park
Long Hanborough, Witney, Oxon. OX29 8LN
Tel. 01993 886570

The Pang and Kennet Valleys Countryside Project (FWAG)

The Project Officer, The Old Estate Office, Englefield Road,
Theale. RG7 5DZ
Tel. 0118 9305336
Email: pang.kennet@fwag.org.uk,

Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT),

The Lodge, 1 Armstrong Road, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 4XT.
Tel: 01865 775476.

Natural England

Government Offices, Coley Park. Reading. RG1 6DE
Tel. 01189 581222
Website: www.naturalengland.org.uk/

Specific help in Wokingham and Bracknell Forest can be found from:

Countryside Service, Wokingham District Council,
Dinton Pastures Country Park, Davis Street, Hurst. RG10 0TH
Tel. 0118 9342016
Email: Andy.Glencross@wokingham.gov.uk

BFBC Biodiversity officer and ecologist

Environment & Leisure, Bracknell Forest Borough Council,
Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell. RG12 1JD
Tel: 01344 354125

If you would like more information on the way LWS are selected and surveyed please contact:

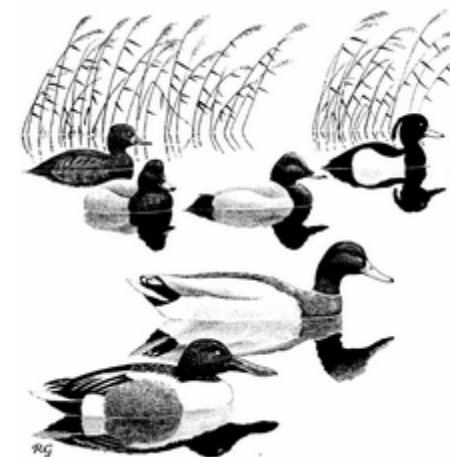
Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TV ERC)

c/o The Oxfordshire Museum
Fletcher's House
Park Street
Woodstock OX20 1SN

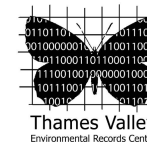
Tel. 01993 814147

Website: www.tverc.org

LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES in Berkshire



Information and advice



Produced by TV ERC