

# Action

# for Wildlife

## The Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan

Produced by the Dartmoor National Park Authority on behalf of the Dartmoor Biodiversity Steering Group.



Dartmoor  
Biodiversity Steering  
Group Members

Country Landowners'  
Association

Devon Wildlife Trust

Dartmoor National  
Park Authority

Devon Birdwatching  
& Preservation Society

Devon County Council

Duchy of Cornwall

English Nature

Environment Agency

Farming & Rural  
Conservation Agency

Forestry Commission

Ministry of Agriculture,  
Fisheries & Food

National Farmers'  
Union

National Trust

Royal Society for  
the Protection of Birds



## Contributors to Action Plan Workshops

Barn Owl  
Trust

British Bryological  
Society

British Canoe  
Union

British Lichen  
Society

China Clay  
Association

Country Landowners'  
Association

Dartmoor Commoners'  
Council

Dartmoor National  
Park Authority

Devon Caving  
Club

Devon County  
Council

Devon Hedge  
Group

Devon RIGS  
Group

Devon Rural Skills  
Trust

Devon Wildlife  
Trust

Devon Birdwatching  
& Preservation Society

Duchy of Cornwall

Environment Agency

English Nature

Farming & Rural  
Conservation Agency

Forestry Commission

Forest Enterprise

Fountain Forestry

Geoff Hearnden  
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Ministry of Agriculture,  
Fisheries & Food

Ministry of Defence

National Farmers'  
Union

National Trust

Peter Dracup (farmer)

River Dart Country Park

Royal Society for the  
Protection of Birds

South West Water

Timber Growers  
Association

West Country Rivers  
Trust

Wild Trout  
Society

William Pengelly  
Trust

Woodland  
Trust





## ST. JAMES'S PALACE

I have been fortunate enough to have had a direct connection with Dartmoor for most of my life. As Duke of Cornwall, I have had wonderful opportunities to get to know the Moor at all seasons, and in all weathers. I have come to know and love the area, and to understand the high level of skill and care that is required from those who manage such a precious and finely balanced environment - to the benefit of all of us.

Dartmoor represents many things to many people. It is principally a place of work for some; of enjoyment, recreation and tranquillity for others. But despite its remoteness and appearance of durability, Dartmoor is not immune from the pressures of late twentieth century life. Those pressures bear down particularly hard on the rich variety of wildlife which helps to make the whole area unique.

Dartmoor's special ecological value has been given official recognition with a wide variety of formal designations including, most recently, candidate Special Area of Conservation status under the EU Habitats Directive. These various designations, but particularly the Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme, have provided both financial incentives and practical advice to encourage landowners and farmers to protect and enhance the conservation interest of their land. Much has been achieved in this way, but I welcome the development of the Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan as a means of assessing priorities and ensuring that the available resources are directed to the areas where they are most needed.

I am sure that everyone involved with the Action Plan will be aware of the immensely difficult economic situation of many people who earn their livelihood in the uplands today - but particularly farmers. At times such as these it is all the more important that we recognise the full extent of the contribution made by traditional farming systems, such as hill farming on Dartmoor, to maintaining biodiversity in a unique environment. The Action Plan helps us to do this and should make a real contribution in ensuring that wildlife conservation and farming are co-ordinated as fully as possible.

I congratulate the Dartmoor National Park Authority and their partner organisations on producing such a well-considered and comprehensive Action Plan. I know that the Duchy of Cornwall staff appreciated the opportunity to be involved with the work of the Steering Group, and we look forward to playing a full part in implementing the initiatives arising from the Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan.

## The Nature of Dartmoor: a Vision

Looking ahead into this century, what do we want the natural world of Dartmoor to look like? We certainly wish to see a landscape that is at least as rich in wildlife and geological features as it is now: it should support the full range of (near) natural habitats and native species as at present, and these should be in good heart.

Rock exposures and natural landforms that are important to the understanding of Dartmoor's origins should remain available for study and appreciation, and be accessible. The natural processes that have shaped the land surface should be allowed to continue unfettered wherever possible.

The vision goes further than just retaining what we have now - we would also like to see some reversal of recent losses or declines in quality. Where wildlife habitats are now in poor condition, we would like to see them restored. Habitats that are rare or highly fragmented such as native woodlands, herb-rich grasslands and wetlands, will be extended and where possible linked through re-creation.

Our vision is that those parts of the moor where heather never gets more than an inch or two high at present will become heathland again, and that ancient woodlands planted up with conifers will be under native trees once more. Where farming practice has been particularly intensive to the detriment of wildlife, appropriate field patterns and uses will be developed to permit wildlife to return. Dilapidated hedgebanks and stone walls will be repaired.

All those native plants and animals currently found in the Dartmoor National Park will survive well into the future, common species as well as rarities. We must conserve skylarks as well as golden plovers, primroses as well as orchids. In this way we will maintain the biodiversity of Dartmoor for future generations. Where species have been lost through habitat deterioration, we will encourage their re-colonisation or reintroduce them once favourable conditions have been restored. We must recognise, though, that the world is ever-changing, with genetic evolution and climate change being largely or completely beyond our control: we must continue to look forward.

To achieve this vision, Dartmoor must continue to be managed by people. It must retain its human communities: in particular farming must remain practical and profitable. The dependence of the tourism industry on a healthy natural environment must be recognised. We must ensure too that proposed measures are compatible with other conservation interests, such as archaeology and landscape, and that a reasonable balance is struck with activities that may at times conflict with nature conservation, such as recreation and mineral extraction.

The final part of this vision for the future is that all people, residents and visitors alike, will come to appreciate, understand and value the natural world within Dartmoor. If this happens, the force for conservation will be irresistible. Our environment will sustain us, and continue to enrich our quality of life.

## Summary

*Action for Wildlife: The Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan* has been produced by the Dartmoor National Park Authority, with financial assistance from English Nature, on behalf of the Dartmoor Biodiversity Steering Group. It outlines the objectives, targets and actions considered necessary to protect and enhance the wildlife heritage of Dartmoor over the next 10 years. It is a companion document to *The Nature of Dartmoor: A Biodiversity Profile* (published by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and English Nature), which describes the wildlife resource of Dartmoor, identifies key species and habitats and sets key conservation objectives. Targets and actions to help reach these objectives have now been agreed through a long collaborative process guided by the Dartmoor Biodiversity Steering Group and led by the Dartmoor National Park Authority. This consensus has been achieved through a series of workshops and meetings involving key stakeholders and the Steering Group. *Action for Wildlife* identifies who will do what and when in order to make a difference for wildlife on the ground.

Targets and actions for 32 key species and 22 key habitats are grouped into the 20 action plans presented here. Authorship of these action plans has been shared widely amongst local organisations and individuals. Key wildlife actions which apply to the whole of Dartmoor, have also been identified including habitat management, research and monitoring and public enjoyment. There is a section identifying how all this will be carried out, including partnerships and funding, and ways in which biodiversity can be incorporated into everyday activities on Dartmoor.

*Action for Wildlife* is also a Dartmoor response to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the South West Biodiversity Action Plan and the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan. 'Thinking globally and acting locally', it includes actions for species and habitats that are both nationally and locally important. The biodiversity planning framework is briefly set out and the relationship between this plan and other Dartmoor plans and initiatives is outlined.

This plan is intended to be a dynamic working document, which will be regularly reviewed and monitored, and actions for this are included. Finally, there is a section on how to find out more about Dartmoor's wildlife and its management requirements and how each of us can contribute to the protection and enhancement of this unique wildlife resource.

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