



Over-arching Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

A report prepared for:
The Caravan Club

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1 Over-arching plan

A Biodiversity Action Plan (or BAP) is an internationally recognized program addressing threatened species and habitats, which is designed to protect and restore biological systems. The original impetus for these plans derives from the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). As of 2006, 188 countries have ratified the CBD, but only a fraction of these have developed substantive BAP documents.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Description

The over-arching Biodiversity Action Plan presented here is designed to be read in conjunction with the 20 'sub-plans' which have been prepared by JUST ECOLOGY for each Caravan Club corporate BAP (cBAP) feature (habitats or species). The purpose of this document is to highlight and emphasise the common themes running throughout the 20 'sub-plans', in order to address issues which encompass all habitats and species.

1.1.2 Overview of features within the sites network

The diversity of wildlife species across the Caravan Club site network is closely associated with the intimate mix of habitats present at each site. The Caravan Club site biodiversity audit carried out by JUST ECOLOGY identified over 30 different habitat types, falling within 7 broad categories (Woodland, Grassland, Water & Wetland, Heathland, Coastal, Boundaries, Isolated features). It also identified some 100 or so species or species groups.

The 20 features chosen for inclusion in the Caravan Club cBAP were selected in order to represent a broad range of habitats and species groups. Rarity, importance, and coverage of these features across the site network were important considerations, but were balanced against the potential for Caravan Club sites to offer a valuable resource for species which have not been recorded at sites previously. By approaching selection in this manner, it is hoped that the Caravan Club cBAP will deliver enhancement of sites for biodiversity which is both currently present, and which has the potential to flourish at Club sites.

Data illustrating the estimated coverage of cBAP features within the sites network is provided in Table 1. These data were collected using two methods: (i) a questionnaire survey of site wardens, and (ii) a GIS analysis of site buffers. Readers are directed to the Caravan Club site biodiversity audit report, which accompanies this document, for a full description of the techniques employed and a discussion of the limitations inherent therein.

Table 1. Estimated site network coverage of features selected for inclusion in the Caravan Club cBAP.

Feature group	No. sites	Feature	Feature group	No. sites	Feature
Habitat areas	82	Broad leaved woodland	Isolated habitats	44	Veteran trees
	38	Scrub	Amphibians	73	Great crested newt
	38	Wet woodland	Birds of prey	42	Kestrel
	64	Grouped plan for grasslands: - Lowland calcareous - Upland calcareous - Lowland dry acid - Lowland meadows - Upland hay meadows - Purple moor grass/pasture - Rough grassland	Farmland birds	81	Grouped plan for Swallows / Swifts / Martins
			Woodland birds	52	Bullfinch
				76	Song thrush
			Insects	99	Grouped plan for bumble-bee & Large garden bumble-bee
			Mammals	61	Common dormouse
			Reptiles	23	Slow worm
	Linear habitats	34	Ditches & banks	Plants	50
23		Rivers & streams		55	Cornflower
63		Species rich hedges		62	Green-winged orchid
				63	Southern marsh orchid

1.1.3 Existing wildlife-focused management occurring on sites

Appropriate management of all of the habitats identified during the Caravan Club site biodiversity audit will generate significant gains for biodiversity. The audit report illustrates that there is already some wildlife-focused management occurring on sites.

A very large number of respondents reported leaving areas of scrub, areas of rough grass, and tree stumps, branches and logs as 'wildlife refuge areas'. This is an excellent starting position, and suggests that Site Wardens are keen to see wildlife thrive at their sites.

However, only 5% of sites reported working to a specific conservation management plan. This means that any management which does occur will be fragmented, as successive Site Wardens use the limited resources and time available for such management for different purposes, with each rotation of staff.

1.1.4 *Limitations for wildlife management*

Leading on from this, Site Wardens identified lack of time and knowledge as the two factors most likely to limit wildlife management at their site. As a result, the provision of authoritative guidance, and comprehensive site-wise conservation management plans are of fundamental importance to the delivery of the BAP targets defined in the feature action plans.

The Site Wardens also identified 'limitation of visitor needs' (e.g. needing short grass for caravan pitches, football, etc.) as a limitation to wildlife management. Site-wise conservation management plans would also identify specific areas where conservation work can complement the existing utilisation of sites. It is important that the purpose of such work is explained to Caravan Club members, who may already be coming to view wildlife on Club sites as a 'need', alongside the need for other land-uses, such as football pitches.

The preparation of authoritative guidance, and comprehensive site-wise conservation management plans should therefore be taken forward as a priority by The Caravan Club.

1.1.5 *Existing wildlife recording on sites*

Very few Site Wardens indicated that wildlife recording was carried out at their site. What little recording is conducted appears mostly to be done by interested individuals, rather than reflecting an effort to engage in any systematic process.

Caravan Club sites should be annually surveyed and monitored on an on-going basis for each of the 20 cBAP features. This could be undertaken in collaboration with a variety of voluntary and charitable organisations. This monitoring must also feed into site management, driving forward a change in management techniques, where necessary and feasible.

However, it is essential that all data gathered for cBAP species is also passed to Local Biological Records Centres, in order that it can be incorporated into existing national databases and can contribute to the maintenance of an up-to-date picture of species status.

1.1.6 *Existing wildlife interpretation information for visitors*

Responses to the Caravan Club site biodiversity audit indicated that some wildlife interpretation, for features occurring on site, is provided at present. However, once again, this does not reflect a systematic or coordinated approach.

The enthusiasm of Caravan Clubbers is a key factor which will influence the success or otherwise of the Caravan Club cBAP. Without support from its members, and crucially the Site Wardens, the Club will struggle to meet its BAP targets, and will be unable to report successful conservation programmes to the BAP administration. However, with the support of members and Site Wardens, the Caravan Club can potentially provide considerable conservation enhancement, throughout its site network.

A systematic and structured approach to wildlife interpretation at all sites is therefore strongly recommended.

1.1.7 Existing community & visitor involvement

In the questionnaire survey, less than 10 Site Wardens stated that there was any existing community & visitor involvement in wildlife or conservation work. The community surrounding each Caravan Club, along with the Club members themselves, offer a potential resource of considerable value to conservation work.

In the first place, there are almost certainly conservation specialists among both the community surrounding each Club site, and within the Club membership. These individuals may be interested in offering short guided walks or talks at interesting sites, to other visitors and the local community. This will enrich the experience of Caravan Clubbers, may serve to improve relations with the local community and will increase the interest for biodiversity in both groups.

For survey and monitoring work, local interest groups will cover most organisms (i.e. local bird/bat/invertebrate/herpetological/botanical groups), and many can be contacted via the wealth of charitable organisations which now exist for the conservation of rare or threatened species.

Some club visitors may be interested in undertaking practical management at certain sites and could perhaps be offered a discounted pitch rate. However, there are a number of issues connected with the use of 'volunteers'; the most important of which is the health and safety of all visitors to the site. Consequently this subject should be explored thoroughly by the Sites Team, before proceeding.

1.2 Action plan objectives and targets

The table below outlines SMART targets for the Caravan Club cBAP process as a whole. These are high priority general objectives that should be applied across the board, and will serve to enhance Caravan Club sites for wildlife. Habitat and species targets for specific cBAP features are outlined in the relevant feature BAP. The targets and objectives are developed in greater detail in the sections which follow.

Table 2. Caravan Club objectives and targets for biodiversity enhancement, with timetable of works.

Objectives	Targets	Timetable	Lead*
A. Policy			
Maintain the current extent and distribution of CC BAP habitats across the site network.	No loss of CC BAP habitat from current sites.	From 2008	CC Sites team
Maintain the current extent and distribution of CC BAP species across the site network.	No loss of CC BAP species from current sites.	From 2008	CC Sites team
B. Site safeguard and management			
Improve the condition of the existing CC BAP habitat resource.	Implementation of suitable and structured management, as advised by CC Sites team.	From 2008 onwards	Site Wardens
Avoiding other habitats of high nature conservation value, expand the area of appropriate CC BAP habitats.	Increase area of CC BAP habitat.	From 2008	CC Sites team
Reduce and where possible eliminate the use of pesticides, fertilisers, fungicides, and herbicides at all CC sites.	Eliminate the wide-spread use of chemical treatments in the environment, unless essential.	2008-2010	Site wardens
Improve the condition of habitat with current populations of, or potential for, CC BAP species.	Implementation of suitable management for habitats with current populations of, or potential for, CC BAP species, as advised by CC Sites team.	From 2008 onwards	CC Sites team, Site Wardens
Increase the extent and distribution of CC BAP species across suitable sites throughout the sites network.	Record CC BAP species at sites where they have not been recorded previously.	2010-2020	CC Sites team, Site Wardens
C. Advisory			
Improve the condition of the existing CC BAP habitat resource.	Identify and advise Site Wardens on management appropriate for each site. This should specify recommended actions and timescales.	From 2008 onwards	CC Sites team
Improve the condition of habitat with current populations of, or potential for, CC BAP species.	Prepare management guidance for all BAP habitats supported by CC sites and for the whole of each site individually: identifying appropriate management techniques (actions/timing/etc.); providing advice to Site Wardens.	2008-2010	CC Sites team
Enhance knowledge among CC members of the importance of CC BAP habitats and species.	Publicise model CC sites which demonstrate good management practices, for public viewing and conservation interpretation.	2010-2025	CC Sites team, Site Wardens

Over-arching Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

Objectives	Targets	Timetable	Lead*
Investigate the potential for joining Grant Schemes, in order to fund CC BAP habitat management.	Applications for grant aid investigated for all appropriate areas.	2010-2015	CC Sites team
D. Research & monitoring			
Increase the amount known about the distribution and extent of CC BAP habitats across all sites within the site network.	Produce geo-referenced CC site-plans & extract data regarding the extent (ha) of CC BAP habitats across the site network.	Analysis to be completed by 2009	CC Sites team
Monitor the management of CC BAP habitats across the site network	Establish a rolling review of the effectiveness of management, using defined target species, for the site network as a whole.	From 2008	CC Sites team
Complete survey and assessment of all sites for CC BAP species.	Survey all potential sites for CC BAP species within 5 years.	2008-2013	CC Sites team
Monitor the status of CC BAP species populations.	Monitor CC BAP species presence on CC sites.	From 2008	CC Sites team
Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of CC BAP species to relevant lead groups (i.e. RSPB) and Local Biological Records Centres, so that it can be incorporated into national databases.	Standard CC species guidance and recording forms prepared and produced by 2009.	From 2008	CC Sites team

*Lead does not imply that the cited body will conduct the work listed. Instead it means that this body will oversee and direct the achievement of the relevant objectives and targets. For instance: (i) identifying regions or sites where work should be focussed; (ii) giving advice on the use of volunteer work parties; (iii) employing external agencies to assess, analyse and provide expert advice, in key areas.

1.3 Proposed actions

1.3.1 Policy

The Caravan Club Sites team will seek to identify all of those Club sites with existing Caravan Club BAP habitats or species.

The Caravan Club Sites team will write, or commission, suitable and structured management plans for Caravan Club BAP habitats and species found within the sites network and, with the assistance of Site Wardens, will seek to manage these pro-actively.

The Club will seek to identify potential areas for BAP habitat creation at existing Caravan Club sites. Recognising the function of the club, these are likely to be small areas. Creating these habitats next to similar existing habitats on, or adjacent to, the site, is likely to increase biodiversity benefit of this strategy.

The Club will also seek to identify and safeguard existing Caravan Club BAP habitats and species at any potential Caravan Club development sites. It is important that these areas are identified at an early stage in the planning process, so that development plans can accommodate these areas appropriately.

1.3.2 Site safeguard and management

Developing the policy laid out in the preceding section, the key issue for site safeguard is to ensure that all areas of Caravan Club BAP habitat, across the site network, are identified and protected.

Once Caravan Club BAP habitat has been identified on site, actions which may damage its biological integrity should be avoided. Damaging actions are likely to include:

- Clearance for development of any kind.
- Excessive 'tidiness' of habitat areas. The primary role for these areas should be to provide wildlife with refuge and foraging opportunities;
- Allowing grazing animals (wild or domestic) unrestricted access, in areas where this is known to be problematic. This is particularly relevant in areas with a high or increasing deer population. In such cases, areas may need to be fenced appropriately, to allow managed access.
- Introduction of known invasive non-native trees and shrubs, such as sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* or rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*, or invasive native plants such as cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*.
- Use of pesticides, fertilisers, fungicides, and herbicides. These environmentally damaging chemicals have numerous negative impacts on species right up to the top of the food chain & should be eliminated from Caravan Club site management practice, wherever possible.
- Drainage of naturally wet areas (i.e. ditches, grassland or woodland)

Favourable management for Caravan Club BAP habitats and species should be promoted across the site network. Actions which may enhance biological integrity should be encouraged. Actions likely to result in biodiversity enhancement include:

- Relaxation or cessation of any cutting regime, in areas which are not intensively used by visitors. For example, hedges or shrubs away from pitches, and any grassland away from direct use as paths, pitches, or play areas.
- No more than 1/3 of the hedgerow/shrub/scrub areas onsite should be cut/laid in any one year. By cutting hedgerows in rotation, wildlife will always have refuges, and sufficient food in the form of leaves, fruit and berries;
- The creation of buffer strips alongside Caravan Club BAP habitats, wherever possible;

- Retention of dead wood in Caravan Club BAP habitats; deadwood provides valuable habitat for invertebrates and small mammal species, which in turn provide food sources for wildlife further up the food chain;
- Removal of invasive non-native plant species such as Indian, or Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* and Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*;
- Provision of bat and bird boxes wherever appropriate.

Due thought and consideration should be given to the management of Caravan Club BAP habitats and species wherever they occur, across the site series.

1.3.3 Advisory

Simple management guidance for sites containing Caravan Club BAP habitats and species should be prepared for the Caravan Club, tailored to the needs of Site Wardens, and individual sites. A qualified ecologist should be retained for this purpose.

Training events or discussion forums should be established by the Sites Team / BAP Officer for Site Wardens, in order to provide guidance in the management of BAP habitats or species. These events could be held at specific flagship sites which have been successful in developing good practice for a feature, or features, to allow other Wardens to see at first hand the impact of appropriate management.

The statutory conservation agencies (Natural England, the Countryside Council for Wales, and the Scottish Natural Heritage), and a range of other organisations would each be happy to provide advice and recommendations on the management of BAP habitats for nature conservation. These organisations may have locally based officers who may be prepared to visit a site, and offer practical information on a site-by site basis.

1.3.4 Future Research and Monitoring

The Caravan Club should complete a full survey of all sites, to establish the status of Caravan Club BAP habitats and species across the site network. This survey could be undertaken by professional, or trained volunteer, surveyors. This could also form an element of the on-going programme of site audits. This information should feed into the production of geo-referenced Caravan Club site-plans, with data regarding the extent (ha) of Caravan Club BAP habitats across the site network. Such plans would greatly increase the ease with which appropriate management could be implemented.

Any management work carried out on Caravan Club BAP habitats should be recorded. Photographs (before and after works) are a minimum requirement, but more detailed descriptions of what was done and how the habitat responded, are more useful for future management.

Standard Caravan Club species identification and recording forms should be prepared and produced for Caravan Club Site Wardens by 2009. These forms should be returned to a nominated Caravan Club BAP officer, who will have responsibility for carrying forward BAP implementation.

1.3.5 Communications and Publicity

At a site level it will be necessary to explain (e.g. with leaflets/ signs/ posters/ interpretation boards) management activities on the site, particularly if access is being affected, or if the activity looks 'destructive', through actions such as rhododendron clearance, woodland thinning, or coppicing. Club members will be much more enthusiastic if they can see that work is being undertaken to enhance the site for wildlife, and by extension, for their enjoyment.

The Caravan Club should seek to promote, through publicity and media opportunities, a wider and more sympathetic understanding of the importance of selected BAP habitats and species, and of the work being done to enhance and conserve them. This should be targeted towards Caravan Club members in the first instance, but can be expanded, where appropriate.

1.4 Implementation

1.4.1 Personnel

Initially, the Caravan Club Sites team will 'lead' on all aspects of BAP implementation. However, it is strongly recommended that a Caravan Club BAP officer be appointed, to take forward the action and monitoring outlined in the cBAP documentation. The officer should be based at Caravan Club Head Office. The work involved in coordinating BAP implementation should not be underestimated.

Much of the practical management of Caravan Club BAP habitats and species at individual sites will be carried out by Site Wardens. However, some work will require conservation agency consent or licensing (i.e. for protected animal and plant species), while other work may require specialist skills and equipment. Professional advice should be sought in these cases.

1.4.2 Monitoring and review

The Caravan Club BAP officer will be responsible for implementing review of the cBAP framework. It is recommended that this review is undertaken on a rolling basis, such that the progress made for each habitat and species BAP is reviewed at least once in every 5 years. It is suggested that this process begin only after work for all of the BAP features is underway, and no later than 5 years following the launch of the BAP process.

1.4.3 Caravan Club Head Office

Alongside an increased awareness and implementation of structured management for specific cBAP features, across the site network, it is important that the Biodiversity Action Plan be incorporated into Head Office meetings and committee structure.

The nominated BAP officer based at Caravan Club Head Office should co-ordinate the following strategic activities:

- Preparation of management guidance on a site or feature basis;
- Provision of advice to Site Wardens;
- Preparation of standard Caravan Club species guidance and recording forms;
- Production of geo-referenced site-plans with data regarding the extent (ha) of BAP habitats across the site network;
- Centralisation of wildlife records and updating BAP audit;
- Community & visitor involvement;
- Warden training;
- Promotion of BAP features and any notable successes;
- Funding sources and grant aid;
- Actions to link into existing initiatives and partnerships;
- Formation of new partnerships;
- Rolling programme of ecological surveys.

1.5 Partner organisations

There are a considerable number of schemes, initiatives, organisations, partnerships and grants affecting Caravan Club cBAP features. These are covered in detail in each of the feature BAPs. Those which are applicable across the full range of BAP features are listed below.

1.5.1 Statutory conservation advisors

Natural England. Natural England is the successor agency to English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Rural Development Service. Natural England works to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas. <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>

Countryside Council for Wales. The Countryside Council for Wales is the Government's statutory adviser on sustaining natural beauty and wildlife in Wales. <http://www.ccw.gov.uk/>

Scottish Natural Heritage. The Scottish Natural Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on sustaining natural beauty and wildlife in Scotland. <http://www.snh.org.uk/default.asp>

1.5.2 Conservation and grant making bodies

Defra - Environmental Stewardship Scheme. Environmental Stewardship is a new agri-environment scheme which provides funding to land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management on their land. The scheme is intended to build on the recognised success of the Environmental Sensitive Areas scheme and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Its primary objectives are to:

- Conserve wildlife (biodiversity);
- Maintain and enhance landscape quality and character;
- Protect the historic environment and natural resources;
- Promote public access and understanding of the countryside;
- Natural resource protection.

Details can be found online at: www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm.

Forestry Commission. The role of the Forestry Commission spans research, commercial timber production, sustainability programmes and policy, as well as learning and leisure. The Forestry Commission provides financial support for the creation and management of woodlands. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/>.

1.5.3 Biological Recording

Local Biological Records Centres. The following LBRC (or LRC) contacts list contains the details of all LRCs across the UK. <http://www.nbn-nfbr.org.uk/nfbr.php>

1.5.4 Charitable organisations

The Wildlife Trusts. The Wildlife Trust is the largest UK voluntary organisation dedicated to conserving the full range of the UK's habitats and species. There is a regionally-specific Trust for each area of the country. <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>

Habitats

The Woodland Trust. The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading charity dedicated solely to the protection of our native woodland heritage. <http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk/index.htm>

Pond Conservation. Pond Conservation is a centre for information and practical advice on the conservation of ponds, rivers, lakes, ponds, canals and drainage ditch systems. [The organisation was founded as Pond Action, subsequently merging with the Ponds Conservation Trust in 2001, and is now known as Pond Conservation] <http://www.pondstrust.org.uk/>

Plantlife: an 'RSPB for plants'. Plantlife is the only charity working solely to protect Britain's wild flowers and plants, fungi and lichens, and the habitats in which they are found. <http://www.plantlife.org.uk/>

Birds

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The RSPB is Europe's largest wildlife conservation charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and other wildlife. <http://www.rspb.org.uk/>

British Trust for Ornithology. The BTO is a bird research charity which investigates the populations, movements and ecology of wild birds. www.bto.org

Birdlife International. Birdlife International aims to prevent the extinction of any bird species; maintain and where possible improve the conservation status of all bird species; conserve and where appropriate enlarge sites and habitats important for birds; help conserve biodiversity and integrate bird conservation into people's livelihoods. <http://www.birdlife.org/index.html>

The Game Conservancy Trust. The Game Conservancy Trust conducts scientific research into Britain's game and wildlife. It advises landowners on improving wildlife habitat and lobby for agricultural and conservation policies based on science. www.gct.org.uk/

Plants

Plantlife (see Habitats section)

The Botanical Society of the British Isles. This society is the major national source of information on the status and distribution of British and Irish flowering plants and ferns. It achieves this by collating and disseminating species records, including producing species atlases. http://www.bsbi.org.uk/html/about_bsbi.html

Mammals

The Mammal Society. The Mammal Society works to protect British mammals, halt the decline of threatened species, and advise on all issues affecting British mammals. www.mammal.org.uk

Amphibians and reptiles

The Herpetological Conservation Trust. HCT provides information and advise for a range of amphibians and reptile species. <http://www.herpconstrust.org.uk/>

British Herpetological Society. The BHS undertake conservation activities to benefit amphibians and reptiles. The organisation engages in field studies and conservation management and provides a platform for the open discussion of herpetology for scientists, conservationists and enthusiasts alike. <http://www.thebhs.org/>

Froglife. Froglife is a conservation charity which aims to improve the conservation of native frogs, toads, newts, lizards, and snakes (i.e. the native herpetological fauna) Froglife provide a Wildlife Information and Data Service including free literature on reptiles and amphibians. <http://www.froglife.org/>

Invertebrates

Buglife - The Invertebrate Conservation Trust is the first organisation in Europe devoted to the conservation of all invertebrates, and is actively engaged in saving Britain's rarest bugs, slugs, snails, bees, wasps, ants, spiders, beetles and many more fascinating invertebrates. www.buglife.org.uk

1.6 References

Wikipedia (2007) Web-based free encyclopedia.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page