

Avon BAP Water and Wetlands Group Meeting
 17th September 2007
 10 am – 12.30 pm
 Avon Wildlife Trust



Chair: Melissa Clarkson
 Minutes: Matt Hamilton

Agenda		
1	<p>Introductions & apologies</p> <p>Present: Melissa Clarkson (EA), Matt Hamilton (ABP), Mary Wood (AWT), James Field (NSLMP), Lydia Robbins (AWT), Mike Johnson (RSPB)</p> <p>Absent: Robin Marshall-Ball (BASC), Lucy Rogers (AWT), Miriam Woolnough (BAN), Tim McGrath (AWT), Helen Hall (BCC), Oda Dijkterhuis (British Waterways SW), Chris Klee (BW), Sam Jarvis (NSC), Susan Stangroom (NSC), Tim Corner (BRERC), Kathy Derrick (BLR), Sally Pattison (SGC), Ruth Barden (WW), Chris Sperring (Hawk and Owl Trust).</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JF to investigate Clevedon Wildfowlers sightings of water voles • MH reported that there was a small amount of Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture habitat in Avon, all of it in the Gordano Valley • MW reported that the footprint at the Create centre had been confirmed as that of an otter • MH reported that NE were still trying to replace Kate Jeffries, and that whoever is appointed would be the best rep for the group, but Chris Westcott has kindly agreed to stand in, in the mean time. • MH reported that he had received a promising response from Mark Lloyd of the Association of Conservation and Angling, who hoped to attend the next meeting. 	JF
3	<p>AWT/EA Crayfish Project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MC reported that earlier in the year, they had looked at Colliters brook as a possible translocation site as it had no signal crayfish and was a small watercourse, isolated from possible interference. Suggestion of translocating White-clawed crayfish from the Bristol Frome. Translocation project has been affected by CS departure and now on hold pending results of South Glos surveys. • LRob reported that on sites which previously were abundant in native sp, no crayfish have recently been found at all. However, crayfish were found at Bradley Brook where they were previously unrecorded. Results negative overall, altering the emphasis of the project from looking for good translocation sites to monitoring declining population . • MC suggestion of possible reasons for crayfish decline, such as pollution, however EA found no sign of pollution when testing at Frenchay. • MW suggested Orchard Pools at Severn Beach as a possible translocation site. • MC reported that the EA had received a report of a small otter being killed in an illegal crayfish trap 	

<p>4</p>	<p>Invasive Species/ Bristol Living Rivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KD sent the following update on the BLR invasive species project: <p><i>"BLR has started a 'project' on invasive weeds led by Guy Pluckwell from the Environment Agency on a 1 day/week basis. We are holding a stakeholder conference on 27th Sept to start the ball rolling. It will be a morning with key speakers including DEFRA who are doing the national strategy. The intention is to start a forum to co-ordinate efforts and strategy and there has been interest outside of the council (Hampshire cc) and local authorities. We hope to get Network Rail to attend and contractors. We have limited places but will do our best to accommodate further requests to attend.</i></p> <p><i>We are carrying out an invasive weeds survey at the moment with groups and our own staff. We have a few gaps along watercourses that need doing if anyone can offer volunteer help or know someone who can help we'd be grateful. Email guy.pluckwell@bristol.gov.uk</i></p> <p><i>We are in contact with Paula Spiers who is working on a funding bid to tackle weeds along the Frome.</i></p> <p><i>We are interested in having contact with any person/ organisations who have knowledge or interest in being a part of this project and 'halting the invasion'."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH reported that the Avon-Frome Partnership and BRERC were also undertaking invasive species projects. MH suggested putting the item on the agenda for the next meeting so that it can be discussed with all relevant parties • JF reported that IDB are tackling floating pennywort on Bleadon levels. • LRob reported huge infestation of invasive species at Ham Brook • MH to forward BLR strategy. 	<p>MH</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Water voles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MH reported that initial funding had been received from Bristol Zoo and Wessex Water enabling the water vole project at Avonmouth to get underway. LRob will be leading on the project for AWT with assistance from MH, and the focus for this financial year will be on liaising with landowners. LRob is currently working with the IDB to ascertain who has responsibility for rhine management. • MW suggested potential for Rhine maintenance as part of development at Severnside. MH to raise at the UA ecologists meeting • MJ reported major bird survey starting in Avon this year, it would be good to raise with landowners whilst we are talking to them. • JF reported on possible water vole project for 6 southwest counties including Avon, submitting a bid to HLF for 1 million in April. • JF reported on Bleadon levels survey. Findings show numerous water voles around sewage works lagoons and along every section of drainage board managed rhines. Main problems are low water levels and dried up rhines but a decent sized population has been observed. In process of writing up report and then looking to develop project with Wessex water and IDB. All data will be reported to BRERC. • MJ reported that Royal Holloway College have done lots of research on Water Vole Key Sites and they may have a bank of data. • JF reported that he was still getting the odd report of water vole on the rest of the NSLM, including a report of sightings at Claverham from a reliable source. 	<p>MH</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JF also reported that whilst carrying out recent surveys, he surveyed a ditch both before and after it had been cleared and saw around 15 burrows when the ditch had been cleared that had not been visible before, so there is quite a high potential for under recording. • The released population at Portbury is still doing well 	
7	<p>Pondways – Lydia Robbins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For project update see separate document ▪ Other amphibians found and lots of crassula invasive sp. 	
8	<p>Updates round the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JF - looking at new options for funding the NSLMP, HLS is looking more positive, so hoping to complete some FEPs soon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dormouse survey underway, but habitat is sub-optimal. Need recommendations for connectivity. ○ Otter group still successful, surveying hoping to move from quarterly to monthly. Draft otter SAP written for BCC. ○ Various bat surveys including a bat roost on the curtain in a crematorium! Also one record of lapwing successfully breeding. • MW - completed water vole survey at Severnside but no signs. No records of GCN in rhines but some in two new ponds. • MJ - has been publicising the marine bill campaign. Also major campaign due on urban gardens for decline of garden birds. Using sparrows, starlings, thrush and blackbird as key indicators of decline. Decline possibly linked to lack of insects for feeding of young. • LRob - Herpetological Conservation Trust issued good leaflets on pond creation • MH - needs articles on BAP work for newsletter. JF volunteered some. • MC - last year EA and AWT translocated crayfish from Wiltshire to place near Butcombe. Went out to survey a year later and found just one dead crayfish. Need to do further work to establish whether translocations can be successful, before more are undertaken. When looking at original Wiltshire site, coexistence between signals and white-clawed was found. 	
15	<p>Next meeting date</p> <p>Tuesday 18th March 2008 from 10am – 12.30 at AWT.</p>	