

Avon BAP Water and Wetlands Group Meeting  
 20<sup>th</sup> March 2007  
 10 am – 12.30 pm  
 Avon Wildlife Trust



Chair: Melissa Clarkson  
 Minutes: Matt Hamilton

Agenda		
1	<p><b>Introductions &amp; apologies</b></p> <p>Present: Melissa Clarkson (EA), Matt Hamilton (ABP), Lucy Rogers(AWT), Mary Wood (AWT), James Field (NSLMP), Robin Marshall-Ball (BASC), Lydia Robbins (AWT), Kathy Derrick (BLR), Tim Corner (BRERC).</p> <p>Absent: Craig Stenson (AWT), Miriam Woolnough (BANES), Jo Illsley (BRERC) Tim McGrath (AWT), Helen Hall (BCC), Oda Dijkterhuis (British Waterways SW), Mike Johnson (RSPB), Sam Jarvis (NSC), Susan Stangroom (NSC), Sally Pattison (SGC), Ruth Barden (WW), Chris Sperring (Hawk and Owl Trust).</p>	
2	<p><b>Minutes of last meeting and matters arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RMB is willing to run free training days on mink trapping – suggested inviting Glos WT along as well.</li> <li>• LR reported that TC is mapping SNAs with some funding from local authorities and some from NE. This should lead to a BAP Atlas being produced</li> <li>• RMB reported that he will be overlaying the survey data from shooting grounds onto Nature Map</li> <li>• RMB to send survey data to BRERC</li> <li>• MH to follow up terms of reference from those partners who have not yet signed them</li> <li>• MH to organise group trip to see the crayfish translocation site</li> <li>• MH to find out if we have any purple moor grass and rush pasture in Avon</li> </ul>	<p><b>RMB</b></p> <p><b>MH</b></p> <p><b>MH</b></p> <p><b>MH</b></p>
3	<p><b>AWT/EA Crayfish Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LR reported that CS has nearly completed surveying Bristol streams for crayfish. No crayfish have been found, but a good potential translocation site has. Some funding from NE has been received for the translocation project.</li> <li>• LR reported that AWT have been doing some work for BANES on Crayfish distribution in Avon and have produced distribution maps as a result</li> <li>• TC reported that BRERC have records of Noble Crayfish in Avon – we are the only site for them in England. They are not native, but globally threatened.</li> <li>• MC reported on a resurgence of interest amongst the public in catching signal crayfish for eating. The EA is not issuing licences for trapping because a) populations of signal and WC crayfish are often found together and identifying one from the other is difficult b) there has been an outbreak of crayfish plague on the Sherston Avon and trappers can spread this when moving equipment and c) trapping isn't an effective way of reducing the signal crayfish population.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LR/</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KD asked if there were any plans to produce a leaflet on WCC. LR replied that it had been decided that the money was better spent on practical projects.</li> </ul>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Water Vole</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LR reported that a project brief had been drawn up for the water vole population at Avonmouth and that funding bids had been made but were unsuccessful. MH to continue to look for funding.</li> <li>▪ LR reported back from the Wildlife Trusts Water for Wetlands meeting where Avon joined a group of five counties from Cornwall to Wiltshire looking at a landscape scale water vole project.</li> <li>▪ LR reported back from a meeting with Wessex Water where the possibility of a partnership project with funding from them directly was discussed.</li> <li>▪ LR reported that the WV population was under threat from development and that action was needed now to protect them.</li> <li>▪ RM reported mink control is being carried out by the Gordano, Goblin Combe and Wrington Shoots as well as the Weston Gun Club.</li> <li>▪ RM reported sightings of water vole on ponds run by wildfowlers at Brean Down</li> <li>▪ JF reported an isolated sighting at Walborough, but with little potential. All to send any records to BRERC.</li> <li>▪ The success of the mink trapping program in Somerset was reported – water vole numbers are increasing.</li> <li>▪ JF reported that there was still no solid evidence of WV on the NSL&amp;M, although there had been several reliable-sounding sightings. JF will contact Clevedon Wildfowlers who believe they have water vole present.</li> </ul>	<p><b>MH</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p> <p><b>JF</b></p>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Update on Bristol Living Rivers Project – Kathy Derrick</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bristol Living Rivers Project has two full-time posts and further details of its activities can be found at <a href="http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk/rivers">www.bristol-city.gov.uk/rivers</a>.</li> <li>• Recent projects include the Lower Frome, where rubbish clearance has taken place. Two kingfishers were seen, but otherwise little is known about nature-value of the river and that makes it difficult to engage with the local community who are unaware of its potential. KD reported that they were keen to undertake some habitat creation and were looking for advice on planting schemes etc. LR offered to help.</li> <li>• Seven river walks are planned for this year.</li> <li>• JF reported that an otter had been sighted in the Docks – he will pass details to KD</li> <li>• KD/MW reported on a possible otter footprint near the create centre. KD to forward photo to MW for confirmation</li> <li>• Some mapping of invasive weeds has been carried out. Guy Pluckwell from EA coming in to co-ordinate the project. Data from project will be passed to BRERC.</li> <li>• KD asked for contributions for the Living Rivers newsletter, especially about nature as this is something that always interests community groups.</li> </ul>	<p><b>KD/ LR</b></p> <p><b>JF</b></p> <p><b>KD/ MW</b></p> <p><b>KD</b></p> <p><b>MH/ JF/CS</b></p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>BARS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LR reported that volunteers from the AWT had been collating progress reports on BAP Actions. They have received and input onto BARS progress reports from almost all partners. They are now starting to archive those actions that are part of partners ongoing work so as to</li> </ul>	

	<p>concentrate on actions that have been bought about by the BAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ RMB reported that he hadn't received any requests for progress reports – MH to chase up</li> <li>▪ LR reported that the work on BARS had revealed that some actions did not have the most suited lead partners and some were missing partners altogether. Work will start soon on matching actions to the most appropriate partners</li> </ul>	<p><b>MH</b></p> <p><b>MH</b></p>
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Pondways – Lydia Robbins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For project update see separate document</li> <li>▪ LRob reported that the volunteer training days were oversubscribed and the possibility of passing volunteers onto the Living Rivers project was discussed.</li> <li>▪ RMB is planning a shooting survey/event nr Wedmore, which LRob may be able to help with. LRob to provide details of training days to RMB.</li> <li>▪ LRob reported on plans to highlight other wetland BAP species on the survey forms so that as much data as possible is collected.</li> <li>▪ It was decided to use the existing water and wetlands focus group as a steering group for the Pondways project. An NE representative will be sought to replace Kate Jeffreys.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LRob</b></p> <p><b>MH</b></p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Updates round the table</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TC – will be delivering a presentation to the steering group on the BAP Atlas work. After receiving feedback it is hoped the project could be rolled out across the South West.</li> <li>• RMB – BASC held a water vole training day on the Axminster marshes. East Devon has a mink trapping and water vole group and the Weymouth and Dorset wildfowlers have been recruited into the water vole group.</li> <li>• RMB – the cordon sanitaire is in place and struggling WV populations have been identified and trapping targeted appropriately. Glos WT could also be included to widen the cordon sanitaire.</li> <li>• RMB – Somerset Lapwing Project – a five year project being launched in central Somerset to investigate what conditions Lapwings like and to encourage more nesting. To be rolled out to North Somerset next year.</li> <li>• JF – NSLMP contract runs out soon, but the future of the project is looking secure. Have been trying to get landowners into HLS, but no money available at present.</li> <li>• JF – North Somerset Otter Group is fully up and running – full coverage of all 70 sites every quarter.</li> <li>• JF – concerns raised that otter population in Somerset is undergoing steep decline – reasons unclear, possibly linked to bile fluke. A large decline in recordings at known sites and an increase in road deaths has been noted along with a lack of interspecific bite marks on those otters autopsied. Overall message: although recent success of otter is good news, we can't afford to be complacent.</li> <li>• JF – hoping to survey fisheries for water voles.</li> <li>• MC – has received an increased number of calls from fisheries complaining about otters. They are receiving a lot of bad publicity and a lot of people seem to be misinformed e.g. common belief that they have been re-introduced.</li> <li>• RMB – is collecting dead mink carcasses for autopsies – please let him</li> </ul>	

	<p>know if you hear of any.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MW – new volunteer leading on toad crossing, with good success at Clevedon and Bath sites. Trying to raise awareness of toads on Ridgeway Road, Fishponds. Upcoming issue is anglers clearing pondweed in the spring and removing spawn with it. LR suggested getting an angler to join the focus group</li> <li>• MW – just completed pond surveys in three parishes – has been trialling the habitat suitability index.</li> <li>• LR – working with Wessex Water – sampling for nitrates in Catherine’s Valley. It’s a four year project aimed at targeting areas with high nitrate levels and investigating why, and how to reduce levels.</li> <li>• MC – her office has merged with the Blandford office to become the Wessex Area Office. Her area now includes Avonmouth.</li> </ul>	<b>MH</b>
<b>15</b>	<p><b>Next meeting date</b></p> <p>Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September from 10am – 12.30 at AWT.</p>	