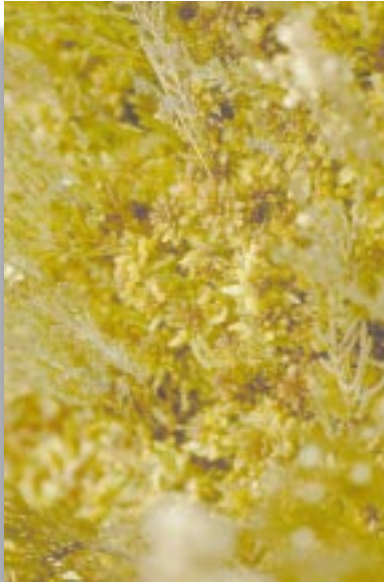




Edinburgh's Biodiversity Action Plan



In 1997, the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership was established. The Partnership represents a coalition of over 50 different organisations drawn from government, the voluntary and commercial sectors, research, education and amenity groups. Edinburgh is also very fortunate in being able to call on an impressive range of natural history and environmental specialists from within its institutions and from a pool of independent experts. To implement the new Plan, they appointed a Steering Group to oversee the selection of species and habitats for which individual Action Plans were to be drawn up.

Species Action Plans

The first step was to compile an "ecological audit". The Lothian Wildlife Information Centre, which collects ecological records for the whole of the Lothians, was able to supply a list of over 8,000 species of plants and animals recorded as occurring in Edinburgh. These included lower plants, like mosses and lichens, and many of the multitudinous groups of invertebrate animals. The list is not exhaustive - many species remain unrecorded - but it provided an excellent basis for identifying conservation priorities.

The Biodiversity Steering Group turned to Edinburgh's wildlife experts for recommendations about which species should be included in the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan. The considerations which guided selection, based on the UK Biodiversity Group's recommendations, can be summarised as follows:



- species that are UK Biodiversity priorities (e.g. water vole)
- species of conservation concern (e.g. sticky catchfly)
- species which are regionally scarce and for which Edinburgh preserves a significant population (e.g. sparrowhawk)
- species for which actions would have "added value" for a range of other species or habitats (e.g. great spotted woodpecker was chosen because the action to preserve dead wood also benefits a whole range of other animals, plants, fungi and micro-fauna/flora reliant on dead wood)
- species chosen should come from a cross-section of Edinburgh habitats
- species for which people had an affinity (e.g. badger) or for which practical opportunities existed to easily engage the public in its conservation, (e.g. the common toad, for which a public survey of garden ponds and other privately managed water bodies is planned)
- the range of species should be a cross-section of the different taxonomic groups in the "8,000" species audit



The final arbiter of selection was the Steering Group, who appointed specialists within their ranks or in the wider pool of expertise in Edinburgh to draft the 97 Species Action Plans.

Habitat Action Plans

Selection of the habitats for action departed from the UK Biodiversity Action Plan's priority habitats, since a relatively small area of urban developed landscape cannot be expected to encompass very many nationally important habitats. The Steering Group recognised 11 broad habitats in the City of Edinburgh area and decided to draw up action plans for all of them, creating an opportunity to enhance Edinburgh's environment across its whole range. A twelfth Habitat Action Plan, for the Union Canal, was the only named habitat site, for reasons of specificity of the actions required for this important wildlife and recreational corridor.

The 12 Habitat Action Plans cover the entire area of the City of Edinburgh. Actions designed to enhance habitats will benefit the many species that inhabit them. Some of these species already have their own Species Action Plans, and the relevant ones are listed in each Habitat Action Plan.

Plan Implementation

The Species and Habitat Action Plans have, initially, a 5-year time frame. Each plan contains a list of agreed actions for achieving attainable, yet visionary, targets for conserving or enhancing the status of the plan's subject. Some of the targets have a shorter time-scale of perhaps 2 years, so that progress can be reviewed if need be. Each Species or Habitat Action Plan has a list of named contacts responsible for implementing the plan. Work on the actions is to be carried out by people and organisations from within the wide group of partners, including, it is hoped, a large body of public volunteers: The Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership.



The actions are split into the four seasons of the year. Winter covering the months January, February and March; Spring being April, May and June; Summer extending over July, August and September; Autumn ending the year with October, November and December.



Plan Monitoring

Monitoring is an important aspect of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan. Not only will the actions themselves be monitored to ensure activity is happening on the ground. But, the effects of the actions will be monitored. This will generally require a baseline study of each habitat or species, and additional post-action survey and analysis to determine whether actions have had a positive impact on local populations and their distribution. Only through comprehensive and detailed monitoring will it be possible to know if additional biodiversity actions are required to conserve or enhance the habitat/species.

Additional Plans

Biodiversity planning is an on-going process. Although this Plan is intended to cover a five year period of activity, it is the intention of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Partnership to identify and implement additional actions for the habitats and species that make up the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan. The Partnership also intends to produce further species action plans as time and resources allow. Although the 97 species in this Plan are representative of Edinburgh's general habitats and reflect current priorities, many more of the 8000+ species recorded across the city require urgent and immediate action if they are not to decline to unsustainable levels or become locally extinct. If you would like to receive plan updates and additional species action plans as they are produced, complete the form at the end of this section and forward to the address given.

