

AUDIT FINDINGS

A number of species currently found in Eastside are nationally important and protected under several pieces of legislation.

Eastside contains possibly the most important wildlife node in Birmingham; the junction of 4 wildlife corridors including 2 canals, the railways and the River Rea.

82% of species found in Eastside were supported by 4 sites – if these disappear without any mitigation so will most of the wildlife in Eastside.

There are 5 species previously recorded in the area which are subject to Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species Action Plans, and are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Sections 1-8.



GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN EASTSIDE

Carry out ecological site surveys at the recommended time and early enough in the process to maximise opportunities and minimise risks of delay or illegal activities.

Time start of works to avoid breeding seasons.

Retain existing corridors and habitat.

Create new temporary habitats: use temporary habitat creation to reduce costs of temporary landscaping of sites awaiting development.

Protect/ mitigate for damage to existing habitats. Areas of habitat, especially bare soil and 'wasteland' destroyed during redevelopment should be recreated due to their important ecological role.

Regardless of existing habitat value, protect mature trees and shrubs, install features such as green roofs, nest boxes and bat bricks.

Use native species in high quality designed landscapes to help insects and birds to thrive.

Enhance existing habitats: amend maintenance regimes and increase the % of native species in planting schemes -> (see the Eastside Biodiversity Audit).

Management plans produced for each site will ensure that maximum ecological value and contribution to a high quality environment will be achieved.

THE LAW AND PROTECTED SPECIES

A number of species currently identified at Eastside are protected by several pieces of legislation. These include:

- The Black Redstart is protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (WCA), and Appendix II of the Bonn Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. The West Midlands population is nationally significant.
- Bats are protected under EHD (European Habitats Directive) Annex 1, WCA (1981) 8 is also listed in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Species Action Plan.
- Section 14 of the Countryside Rights of Way Act (2000) lists the UK BAP priority species (1998)

The penalty for an offence relating to these species is a £5000 maximum fine and up to 6 months imprisonment.

Introducing mitigation measures at the preliminary feasibility/design stages will incur little or no additional cost in terms of materials/building/landscaping/maintenance. Following this process can reduce costs and time in the planning process and reduce the risk of illegal activities being unknowingly carried out.

The quality, size, number and the diversity of the habitats will be key factors for the survival of Eastside's wildlife.

Information, References, Contact Details

Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, 28 Harborne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3AA - www.bbcwildlife.org.uk.

www.livingroofs.org, www.birmingham.gov.uk, www.blackredstarts.org, www.sustainable-eastside.net.

Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan
Birmingham City Council Nature Conservation Strategy, (SPG)

Donovan et al (2004) Biodiversity Audit for Eastside

Emery, M (1986) Promoting Nature in Cities and Town: A Practical Guide. Croom Helm, London

West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and West Midlands Regional Biodiversity Strategy

Eastside Biodiversity Strategy

Acknowledgements

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Sustainable Eastside

Advice Note No.9

A full biodiversity strategy is under preparation for Eastside and this guidance note provides interim advice

Eastside Biodiversity Audit 2004 SUMMARY



Photos courtesy R Coyne and R. Donovan

Enhancing and increasing the biodiversity in Eastside will help meet the key principles and requirements of PPS9, Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, and help to deliver Sustainable Communities in line with PPS 1

INTRODUCTION

The biodiversity audit of Eastside carried out in 2004 showed that there are areas of green space in Eastside that are very valuable for wildlife and are homes to nationally rare species of birds, insects and animals.



Photos courtesy Dr R Donovan



On the whole, the designed and landscaped spaces (below) with on-going maintenance were very poor habitats. The unused and neglected spaces (above) were the richest.



Photos courtesy Dr R Donovan



Many of these neglected but biodiversity rich spaces will be lost as the regeneration of Eastside takes place. However, it will be possible at little or no extra cost to create a wildlife rich and bio-diverse Eastside which adds to public health and well being and adds economic value to the area by:

- Retaining features of high biodiversity value;
- Enhancing habitats to increase their wildlife value;
- Mitigating the impacts on features of wildlife value;
- Compensating for the loss of high value habitats by creating new biodiverse rich areas.

The Eastside Biodiversity Audit

Methodology

The Audit involved an initial desk study and Phase 1 Site Survey in autumn 2003, a detailed Phase 2 Survey of 8 sites during spring and autumn 2004, with follow up surveys in 2005.

Findings

Eastside has a wide range of habitats which support a number of rare birds, insects and animals which roost, nest and feed in Eastside or use the area as a wildlife corridor.

The railways, canals and River Rea are important wildlife corridors. Old buildings provide roosts and resting places which will also be lost unless other provision is made as they are refurbished.

The most valuable habitats in Eastside include the former industrial (brownfield) sites where the transient habitats created by industrial decline have evolved. Such sites are important refuges for many nationally important Species of Conservation Concern and Protected Species. The more 'designed' sites and heavily managed sites offer little except nectar sources for visiting insects. Due to survey constraints we can be assured that species diversity is greater than presently recorded. For example, continuing surveys have identified a fly species in Eastside that has been previously recorded only 6 times globally.



AUDIT TIMETABLE

Of the 8 sites surveyed in Phase 2, 4 sites contained 82% of all species recorded. These high biodiverse sites were "wild" with a lack of management. The highly designed, managed sites contained few species. Several Species of Conservation Concern (SCC), Protected and Notable Species were found during the survey.

Birds

37 species were recorded of which the following are Species of Conservation Concern:

black redstart, song thrush, house sparrow, starling, linnet, kestrel, grey wagtail, dunnock, willow warbler & mistle thrush.

Bats

31 common pipistrelle records and 1 Myotis species were recorded. Bats were consistently recorded over the River Rea and the Canals. Many buildings are potential roosts. Further surveys are needed to identify roost sites.

Ground Beetles and Spiders

103 species from 31 families found - Spiders (26 spp/14 families); Beetles (77 spp/17 families) - Five nationally scarce beetle species found.

Butterflies and Moths

No Species of Conservation Concern were identified but the survey was affected by adverse weather. However, the desk study revealed that species with conservation status have been recorded previously including wall brown.

Other insects

334 species from 101 families were recorded. Four nationally rare insect species were found.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

COMPLYING WITH LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Before a development goes ahead advice should be sought on whether a survey should be carried out.

When a survey is required it should be carried out at the appropriate time and by suitably qualified ecologists. (Breeding birds – March to June; Bats – May to August; Amphibians/reptiles – March to May; Invertebrates – March to September)

Ecological survey results are now needed to support planning applications.

The 2004 Biodiversity Audit gives a snapshot of what was found in Eastside at one point in time. It provides background information but does not replace the need for resurvey.

All birds and their nests are protected during the nesting season.

Bats have different roosting sites in winter and summer. Surveys need to be carried out in both seasons. Where a bat roost is found a suitably qualified ecologist will need to apply for a DEFRA licence.

Although it is the developer's responsibility to ensure operations do not violate any legal restrictions, it should be possible to work in partnership with organisations such as Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust and Birmingham City Council for the best interest of all.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADD VALUE

Native plants can be successfully used within high quality formal modern planting schemes and can provide food sources for wildlife without losing the high quality of appearance of the planting scheme. See the planting guide for Eastside.

Allow rare sparsely vegetated habitats to develop on temporary sites as early successional habitats. Before any brownfield site is redeveloped, another should be created in advance as a wildlife reservoir. In addition permanent compensatory habitats should be included in the final design for open spaces.

Although it may not be possible to develop a site without destroying some wildlife, it is possible to preserve much vegetation and wildlife habitats, and to create new habitats within a city. This approach will also have other benefits such as contributing to air quality improvements, reducing noise and enhancing quality of life.

The Birmingham Nature Conservation Strategy, which is adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), contains development and habitat creation guidelines to ensure that where the loss of habitat is unavoidable it will be replaced, like for like, as close as possible to the original site.